TOTAL FILM'S LAST EVER ISSUE

TOTAL FILM

EXCLUSIVE!

GLADIATOR II

BABOONS! RHINOS! MAXIMUS' LEGACY!

Ridley Scott returns to the Colosseum to unleash hell

RED ONE
MOANA 2
PADDINGTON 3
NOSFERATU

JEFF GOLDBLUM
STEVE McQUEEN
PETER DINKLAGE
JOSH BROLIN

FUTURE

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Welcome to

TOTAL FILM
THE SMARTER MOVIE MAGAZINE

Will what we've done in the pages of *Total Film* over the past 27 years echo in eternity? Maybe not. But I hope that what we've put out across 356 issues has informed, entertained, and encouraged you to seek out some damn good movies.

It's fitting that *Gladiator II* should front this, the final issue of *Total Film*. *Gladiator* was on the cover in the mag's early days, Ridley Scott has barely stopped working over our lifespan, and Denzel Washington has consistently proven his GOAT status. Paul Mescal is at the forefront of the talent likely to be dominating screens for the next 27 years at least. As a huge-scale blockbuster with heart and heft, it's an ideal *TF* cover film.

Beyond that, what an issue this is to bow out on, which I think demonstrates *TF* at its best. Alongside the blockbusters, there are features on new films by two of Britain's finest filmmakers, Steve McQueen and Andrea Arnold. A behind-the-scenes look at the new Paddington is nestled alongside a raucous chat with Josh Brolin and Peter Dinklage. The legendary Jeff Goldblum sits down for a huge career talk. We hope there's something here for everyone who loves movies.

But forget the star power and exciting films. I must end by celebrating the people who have poured their passion into these pages, month in, month out. Jordan Farley's razor-sharp instincts and unparalleled sci-fi knowledge have resulted in countless fantastic features. The unflappable Matthew Leyland has overseen the most trustworthy reviews section in the biz (and if you've read anything side-splittingly funny in here, it was probably him). Newer recruits Andy McGregor and Lauren Miles have always understood the assignment and made my job a hell of a lot easier.

Too many writers to name have boosted these pages, but I must shout out our stalwart contributing editors: Paul Bradshaw (far too nice for someone so talented), Kevin Harley (whose lyrical prose even extends to his emails), Leila Latif (purveyor of the finest hot takes), James Mottram (never knowingly not at a film festival), and Neil Smith (a Jedi master in the art of puns). Plus, I must sincerely thank former editor Jane Crowther and editor-at-large Jamie Graham, whose wisdom, guidance and friendship I've been the lucky beneficiary of over the last decade.

Thanks for reading!

Matt

MATT MAYTUM, EDITOR
@MATTMAYTUM

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TOTAL RECALL

At the end of an era, the team reflect on their favourite moments from 27 years of the mag...

EDITOR
MATT MAYTUM

First issue of *Total Film* bought: *Godzilla*/Maria Pitillo (*TF* 19, August 1998).
First issue worked on: Got in the *Prince of Persia* issue (*TF* 165, April 2010), with a DVD review of *Planet Hulk*.
Favourite *Total Film* memory? Visiting the set of *Tenet* to watch a plane engine blow-up. Close second, watching Avengers assemble on the *Infinity War* set.
Best interview experience: One of seven with Christopher Nolan, the pinnacle probably being in the edit suite on *Oppenheimer*.
Worst interview experience: The monosyllabic Bob Hoskins made my first-ever set visit a challenge.

The review I got wrong: Three stars for *War for the Planet of the Apes* was a bit harsh.
Favourite film of *Total Film*'s lifetime? *The Dark Knight*.

DEPUTY EDITOR
JORDAN FARLEY

First issue of *Total Film* bought: *Minority Report* (*TF* 67, August 2002).
First issue worked on: *The Martian* (*TF* 236, September 2015).
Favourite *Total Film* memory? Shacking up with Jamie Graham to cover five consecutive Cannes Film Festivals (2015–19).
Best interview experience? Speaking to Ridley Scott on the set of an Alien film (albeit, *Covenant*).
Worst interview experience? Christoph Waltz for *Tarzan*, as he refuses to speak about his characters (not helpful).

The review I got wrong: Giving *Thor: Love & Thunder* four stars.
Favourite film of *Total Film*'s lifetime? Toss-up between *Mad Max: Fury Road* and *The Matrix*.

REVIEWS EDITOR
MATTHEW LEYLAND

First issue of *Total Film* bought: *TF* 1 (*Ransom*, February 1997), from a petrol station on Dyke Road, Brighton.
First issue worked on: *TF* 62 (*Ocean's Eleven*, March 2002) as freelance; *TF* 130 (*Die Hard 4.0*, Summer 2007) as reviews ed.
Favourite *Total Film* memory: Star Wars Celebration, 2015 (aside from getting conjunctivitis on the plane).
Best interview experience: George Lucas. Told him I really love Star Wars, which I bet he'd never heard before.
Worst interview experience: Ian McKellen – great, except none of it came out because I'd plugged my mic in the wrong hole.

The review I got wrong: *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey* – five stars (two too many).
Favourite film of *Total Film*'s lifetime: *Belle* (animated); *Mulholland Drive* (live action); *The Last Jedi* (obligatory Star Wars pick).

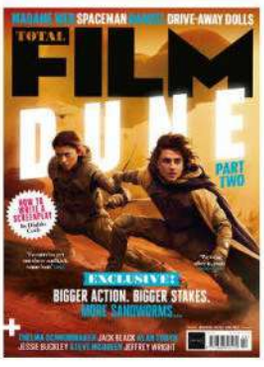
NEWS EDITOR
LAUREN MILES

First issue of *Total Film* bought: *TF* 189 (*The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey*, February 2012).
First issue worked on: *TF* 350 (*Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga*, May 2024).
Favourite *Total Film* memory: Getting to sit opposite Viggo Mortensen to chat about *The Dead Don't Hurt*.
Best interview experience: The fantastic Henry Selick offering extra time to talk about his impressive career.
Worst interview experience: Jared Harris once told off a publicist for not sending me a screener of his latest film...
The review I got wrong: My few reviews haven't been too far off, but I may have been a bit harsh on Nic Cage's *Arcadian*...

Favourite film of *Total Film*'s lifetime: *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* (the extended edition).

ART EDITOR
ANDY MCGREGOR

First issue of *Total Film* bought: It'll be one from late 1999, when I first started working at Future. I probably didn't buy it though as they were always in the office.
First issue worked on: I started just before *TF* 347 (*Dune: Part Two*, February 2024).
Favourite *Total Film* memory: Seeing exclusive cover art before almost anyone else, especially the *Alien: Romulus* xeno art.
Favourite cover worked on: It's got to be the *Alien: Romulus* one (*TF* 353). We got a sneak peek of the artwork back in March and had the cover worked up in a few hours. It only needed a few tweaks once the final artwork came in. The spot UV varnish on the subs cover was a nice touch.



Favourite film of *Total Film*'s lifetime: As it can't be *Alien*, *Aliens* or *Blade Runner*, it'll have to be *Blade Runner 2049*.

EDITOR-AT-LARGE
JAMIE GRAHAM

First issue of *Total Film* bought: *TF* 1 (*Ransom*, February 1997).
First issue worked on: *TF* 50 (Kate Hudson, March 2001).
Favourite *Total Film* memory: First trip to Los Angeles for *Kill Bill: Vol. 1* junket.
Best interview experience: First time I interviewed Tom Cruise/making Robert De Niro laugh by asking when he last called someone a 'fokin' mook'/meeting Martin Scorsese in his NY office.
Worst interview experience: Sam Jackson walking out when I asked him for his favourite cheese, followed by who would win in a fight between a lion and a crocodile.

The review I got wrong: *The Matrix Reloaded* – five stars!
Favourite film of *Total Film*'s lifetime: *There Will Be Blood*.

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

PAUL BRADSHAW

First issue of *Total Film* bought: *TF* 7 (*Batman & Robin*, August 1997).
First issue worked on: *TF* 181 (*Green Lantern*, July 2011).
Favourite *Total Film* memory: Opening a studio door to bump into Schwarzenegger, in full Terminator gear. I think it might also have been in slow-motion.
Best interview experience: It's between Steven Spielberg and Kermit the Frog.
Worst interview experience: Getting off an hour-long call with William Friedkin to realise I'd plugged my recording thing into the wrong socket.
The review I got wrong: *Jack the Giant Slayer*. I spent months being reminded that it didn't deserve four stars every time a London bus drove past with the poster on the side.
Favourite film of *Total Film*'s lifetime: *The Tree of Life*.

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

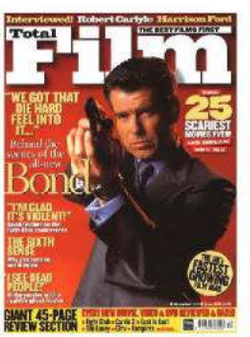
NEIL SMITH

First issue of *Total Film* bought: *TF* 1! It had Mel Gibson on the cover and included an interview with Russ Meyer, 'tzar of titty-boom'.
First issue worked on: I think it was *TF* 33 (Drew Barrymore, October 1999). I gave two stars to *Patch Adams*, which was generous then.
Favourite *Total Film* memory: Hiking up to the Acropolis for a sun-soaked set visit.
Best interview experience: The late Curtis Hanson was an absolute gentleman.
Worst interview experience: Talking to Nicolas Winding Refn made me question my life choices.
The review I got wrong: I still get night sweats over my four-star review of *Eternals*.
Favourite film of *Total Film*'s lifetime: *Before Sunset*.

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

KEVIN HARLEY

First issue of *Total Film* bought: Probably *TF* 35 (December 1999), with Brosnan's Bond and *Fight Club* as cover lines.
First issue worked on: Eek! Sometime mid-2000 – I can remember news pieces on *Lord of the Rings/Requiem for a Dream*, if that helps?
Favourite *Total Film* memory: Too many! So I'll go recent vintage and say taking my son to the *Wonka* premiere for review.
Best interview experience: Benicio del Toro, or Matt Smith as he started *Doctor Who*.
Worst interview experience: I remember being at an Underworld concert and my partner calling to say Peter Weir was on the landline, a day early for my retro *Truman Show* piece. Yikes!
The review I got wrong: *Sympathy for Mr. Vengeance* pops to mind – two stars.
Favourite film of *Total Film*'s lifetime: I struggle with list-making, but *Yi Yi* is an all-timer.



CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

JAMES MOTTRAM

First issue of *Total Film* bought: Pass! Can't remember that far back.
First issue worked on: *TF* 111 (*V For Vendetta*, February 2006). A news piece on Rian Johnson's debut *Brick*.
Favourite *Total Film* memory: Just working day shifts for *TF*, as I occasionally did. First and only time I've ever experienced office life.
Best interview experience: Eddie Murphy for the *Coming to America* sequel. He so rarely does print press, it was a genuine thrill to speak to a hero from my youth.
Worst interview experience: Nobody springs to mind.
The review I got wrong: Ha. That's easy: *Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald*. I gave it five stars. Madness.
Favourite film of *Total Film*'s lifetime: Paul Thomas Anderson's *Magnolia*.

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

LEILA LATIF

First issue of *Total Film* bought: *TF* 44 (*X-Men*, September 2000), just after I moved to the UK.
First issue worked on: *TF* 305 (*Mank*, December 2020), mid pandemic so it would be many months and issues before I actually met the team.
Favourite *Total Film* memory: Asking *Total Film* editor-at-large Jamie Graham to be my mentor after a podcast record.
Best interview experience: First time interviewing my favourite filmmaker Steve McQueen for *Total Film*, he ended with 'If all press was like this I'd love doing press.'
Worst interview experience: A time difference miscalculation meant I slept through a Michael B. Jordan exclusive for *Creed III* (which made a film feature tricky as he was the star *and* director).
The review I got wrong: I've never been wrong, just occasionally ahead of my time.
Favourite film of *Total Film*'s lifetime: *Mulholland Drive*.

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR (AND FORMER EDITOR-IN-CHIEF)

JANE CROWTHER

First issue of *Total Film* bought: *TF* 104 (*War of the Worlds*, Summer 2005).
First issue worked on: As a staffer it was *TF* 166 (*Iron Man 2*, May 2010).
Favourite *Total Film* memory: Too many to choose just one: Tom Cruise cake, being on set of *Skyfall*, spending Valentine's day with The Rock, sending out a cover with 'The Wolf of Wolf Street' on it, wearing a 'Bob' head on set of *Beetlejuice Beetlejuice*, working with every expert genius of the *TF* team…
Best interview experience: Kevin Costner on set of *Jack Ryan* (terrible film, cheeky chat), Baz Luhrmann, Keanu Reeves and Alex Winter.
Worst interview experience: An A-lister who preferred to be golfing than doing an interview and said so.
The review I got wrong: *The Hangover Part II*. Saw it alone, thought it was probably hilarious to most people. It wasn't.
Favourite film of *Total Film*'s lifetime: *Call Me By Your Name/Elvis/ Gladiator/Barbie*.

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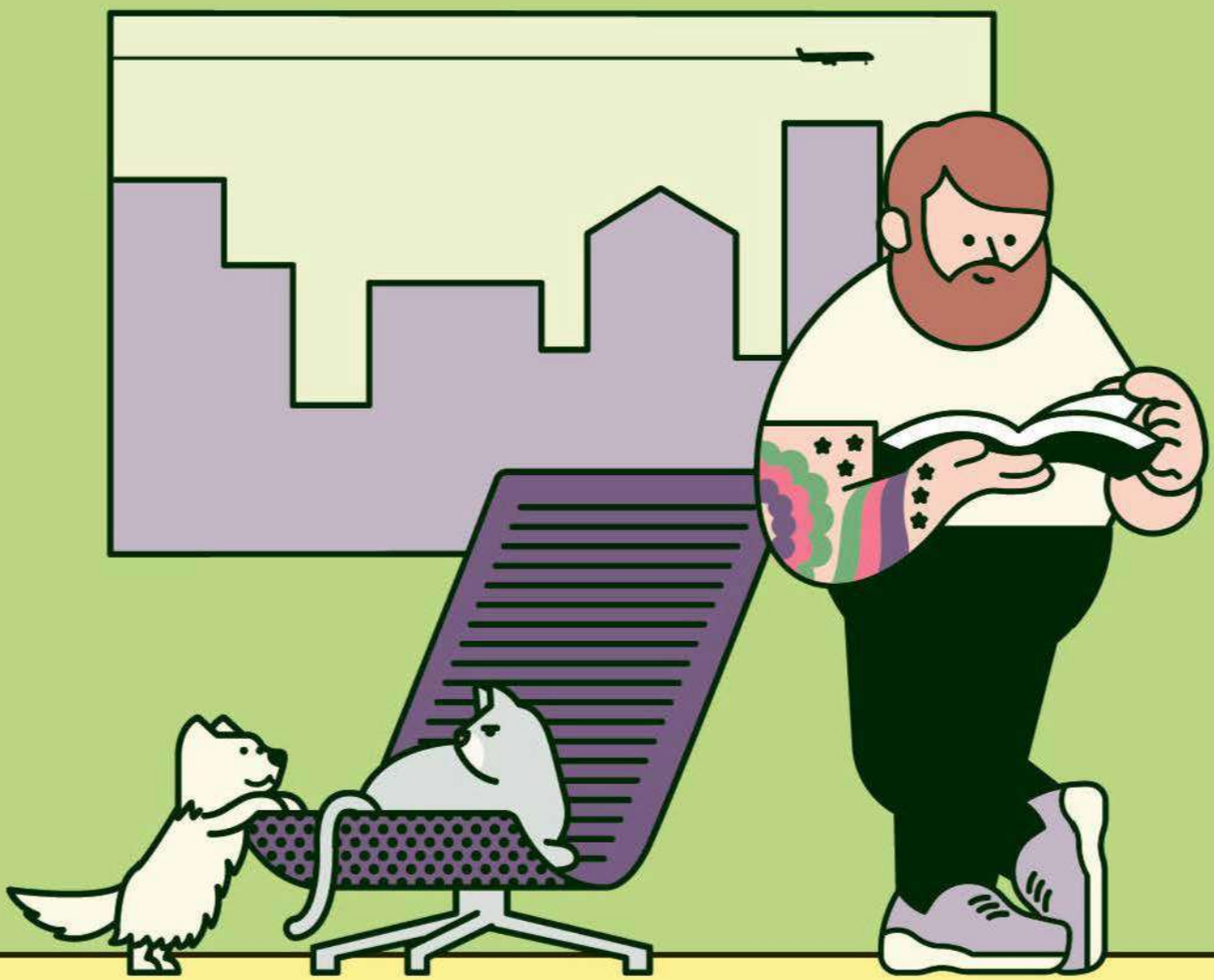

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EDITED BY
LAUREN MILES
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TEASERS

SNOW TIME TO DIE

RED ONE J.K. Simmons' Santa gets kidnapped. Luckily, Dwayne Johnson's on hand to save him...

If 2022's *Violent Night* gave us *Die Hard* in a Santa suit, Jake Kasdan's *Red One* could be retitled North Pole Has Fallen. The world imagined by Kasdan finds Saint Nick kidnapped two days before Christmas Eve. It's up to Dwayne Johnson's head of security, Callum Drift, and Chris Evans' unscrupulous hacker-for-hire, Jack O'Malley, to hunt down the man in red in time for the big day.

But this is Father Christmas like we've never seen him before. 'As we started to get into it, the thought emerged that we would portray Nick with all of this warmth and charisma, but as a sort of commander figure who runs this giant operation,' Kasdan says. 'We started to think about him like a general, a president, or a head of state. As soon as we started to talk about it in those terms, the obvious first call was J.K. [Simmons].'

Such an important figure, of course, needs protection, and that's where Johnson's character comes in. The head of ELF (Enforcements and Logistics Fortification), Santa's right-hand muscleman is a calculating bruiser one Christmas Eve away from retirement. When Hiram Garcia, who works at Johnson's Seven Bucks Productions, pitched Kasdan the idea, his character formed an important starting point.

'There was this notion that DJ would play Santa's right-hand man, who's the head of operations and head of security,' Kasdan recalls. 'And we would call that position the commander of the ELF, which stands for something that has nothing to do with the word. We're pulling back the curtain on these stories that you've grown up thinking you already know, and we're going to show you what they're really like. The ELF is the perfect example of that.'

Working alongside Johnson is hacker, tracker and certified

Dwayne Johnson and Chris Evans play the dynamic duo sent to rescue Santa

scoundrel Jack O'Malley, played by (and written for) Chris Evans – providing another chance, after *The Gray Man* and *Ghosted*, for the actor to play against the Captain America type. 'At the start of the movie, he's this action-movie character, this mercenary badass who has no ethical moorings,' Kasdan explains. 'But underneath that, there's this guy who's got a lot of crises. And as we get to know him, we still do our classic Christmas story, but we do it in a way that doesn't sell out the kind of guy he is. It's not going to be overly warm and fuzzy. It's gonna have a realistic shape to it.'

Combining elements of action, comedy, fantasy and that classic Christmas spirit was always going to be a big ask. But for Kasdan, who cut his blockbuster teeth on the most recent Jumanji films with Johnson, it's a balancing act that came naturally.

'The movies that I loved when I was a teenager could be all those things,' he says. '[They] could be exciting, and they could be funny. When they're funny, they're actually funny; when there's action, it's actual action. And the ones that stick with you the most have some sort of emotional story that they're telling as well – it shouldn't be a half-assed version of it.'

True to his word, the action sequences in *Red One* come thick and fast – and have no qualms about putting famous faces through less-famous furniture. 'If you're working with the [biggest] action stars of our time, you have to let what they do stand up alongside the fact that they've been in some of the best action sequences ever,' Kasdan says. 'You want to at least be trying, right?'

But the aspect of the film which was new to the director might have been the hardest one to pull off: does the film feel Christmassy? 'One of the reasons that people love [Christmas movies] is that they help people get to the thing they love most about the holiday, which is connection to family, connection to loved ones,' the director explains. 'Doing that in the context of a movie like this felt like that would be the bullseye if we could do it right.'

On top of all the eggnog-fuelled action is the lush fantasy landscape that inspired the project in the first place. From the twinkling skyscrapers of the North Pole to the courtyard of an enchanted castle, the film's art department certainly earned their keep. 'That's both the easiest and most fun part of this thing,' Kasdan says. 'As soon as you get into this kind of project, the very first thing that happens is you surround yourself with a bunch of brilliantly imaginative people, and they start to fill out [the film] in every kind of direction.'

A key scene finds Johnson and Evans surrounded by some of the weirdest, least-human denizens of the Christmas holiday canon. Using a team of around 50 make-up artists, the designs of these ghosts, ghouls and goblins were all achieved practically.

'There was a great moment when we started shooting where Chris [Evans] walked on set and he's like, "I've never done this before,"' the director recalls. 'A guy like that, who's done a lot of big movies… You know, you can do anything with CG and visual effects at this point, so mostly we do. It's rare to do this stuff practically, but when you do, there's something really wonderful about it.' **JAMES HARVEY**

RED ONE OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 6 NOVEMBER.

'It's not going to be overly warm and fuzzy. It's gonna have a realistic shape to it'
JAKE KASDAN

Lucy Liu stars as Zoe, the North Pole's operations boss

The team embark on a mission to save Christmas when J.K. Simmons' Santa goes AWOL

Krampus (Kristofer Hivju) with Callum Drift (Johnson), the North Pole's head of security

Sword-wielding snowmen are among the creatures faced during the quest

FRANK MASI, PRIME VIDEO, WARNER BROS.

HOT RIGHT NOW

MICHAEL B. JORDAN IS STEALING THE SHOW...

'I lead by example,' actor Michael B. Jordan said of starring in and directing last year's *Creed III*. 'One of the beautiful things is, like, I could direct with my performance.' It's no surprise, then, that he's once again set to be in front of and behind the camera for a(nother) remake of *The Thomas Crown Affair* for Amazon. The tale of a rich playboy who finds excitement by stealing art, the titular character meets his match in an insurance investigator. The original 1968 movie was led by Steve McQueen and Faye Dunaway, with a 1999 version pitting Pierce Brosnan against Rene Russo. It's unclear who will be on Jordan's tail in the upcoming remake.

Shooting to stardom after 2015's *Creed* revived the Rocky franchise, the actor has since made a name for himself playing the boxing champion Adonis across three films, as well as the Marvel universe's Erik Killmonger. The *Black Panther* villain is one of the superhero franchise's most sympathetic bad guys – something that's enough of a rarity to make Jordan's performance stand out even more, even among stars like Angela Bassett and the late Chadwick Boseman.

Those two prominent franchises have done a lot to shape his upcoming slate of films – with *Creed IV* in development and two collaborations with *Black Panther* director Ryan Coogler currently in the works. *Sinners* is a vampire movie set in the 1930s that also stars the fantastic Delroy Lindo and English actor Jack O'Connell The other, *Wrong Answer*, is a drama that follows an Atlanta teacher as he looks to get funding for his school by faking his students' test scores.

Jordan's also continuing other franchises, starring in an adaptation of Tom Clancy novel *Rainbow Six* – a follow-up to 2021's *Without Remorse* – helmed by *John Wick*'s Chad Stahelski, and set to appear opposite Will Smith in the sequel to 2007's *I Am Legend*. With a busy slate like that, he's sure to continue doing excellent work both in front of and behind the camera. **LAUREN MILES**

SINNERS IS SET FOR RELEASE ON 7 MARCH 2025. CREED IV, WRONG ANSWER, I AM LEGEND 2 AND RAINBOW SIX ARE ALL TBC.

GETTY

Amy Adams plays the stay-at-home mother who is driven to despair

DOG DAYS

NIGHTBITCH Amy Adams is a mum on the edge in Marielle Heller's wild parenting fable.

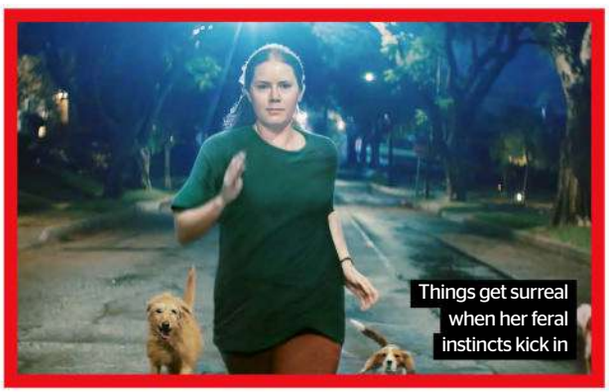
It was when writer/director Marielle Heller showed the screenplay of *Nightbitch* to her husband and her (male) cinematographer Brandon Trost that she stumbled upon a unique premise: 'It's a comedy for women and a horror movie for men,' she tells *Teasers*.

While Heller sees it as more of a primary/secondary parent divide, 'it wasn't until we started showing the movie to people that I started to realise how gendered the response may be… Actually talking about the interior lives of women, and what happens to our bodies as we age – it seems like such a taboo subject matter for men.'

Adapted from the 2021 novel by Rachel Yoder, *Nightbitch* tells the story of a stay-at-home mother (Amy Adams) driven to despair by the banality of rearing a toddler, the dissipation of her career, and the general obliviousness of her husband (Scoot McNairy). As if that wasn't enough, she becomes concerned that she might be transforming into a dog…

Given that the novel is so interior, adaptation was always going to be a challenge. Even producer/star Adams thought so, telling Heller, '"I'm not sure if this could be a movie. But if it could, I think you could figure out how to make it a movie."' That 'perfect challenge' appealed in part because of Heller's previous experience adapting another very interior book, *The Diary of a Teenage Girl*, but also because she read *Nightbitch* after having her second child, amid pandemic-induced isolation.

'This movie is so drawn from my personal life'
MARIELLE HELLER



Things get surreal when her feral instincts kick in

'I was stuck at home with two kids, my husband was working, and I was pretty isolated and losing my mind,' says Heller. 'So the book spoke to me in a very cathartic way.' Inspired by her own animalistic instincts kicking in, Heller says, 'this movie is so drawn from my personal life, it almost just feels like a cheat.'

When it came to the more ambiguous, supernatural-leaning elements, 'You have to set up rules for your world,' explains Heller. 'I kept thinking about the emotional state of the mother, and how she's spending so much time alone [with her son] that her experience has different rules than when she's with anybody else.'

Ultimately, the hope for Heller and Adams was for *Nightbitch* to be a conversation-starter for something too often left unaddressed. 'I think [Adams] and I had such a similar goal when making this movie, which was to make motherhood a less taboo topic, and to make the experience of ageing women something we could talk about.' And while that title is sure to attract attention, Heller adds, 'I'm thrilled to say that nobody has questioned the title ever throughout the process of making this movie.' **MATT MAYTUM**

NIGHTBITCH OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 6 DECEMBER.

ANNA MARIE FOX. SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES

EXCLUSIVE

BAD BLOOD

NOSFERATU Robert Eggers' scary reimagining makes the vampire foul and frightening again...

When Hutter throws open Orlok's coffin in the [F.W.] Murnau version, that was a legitimate jump scare in 1922 – seeing the putrid corpse must have been really terrifying,' muses Robert Eggers of the original *Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror*, the eerie silent masterpiece that gorged on the blood of Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula*. Eggers frowns under his cap. 'So how do we do that now?'

It's a good question, especially given the deluge of vampire movies since – there are more than 170 film versions of *Dracula* alone. 'Also, we've gone all the way to Edward Cullen, where vampires are not scary,' adds Eggers. 'So how do we go in the complete opposite direction of that? Vampires were scary enough that people used to dig up corpses and chop them into bits and set them on fire.'

Well, Eggers' *Nosferatu* is scary as hell, with Bill Skarsgård's Count Orlok proving fully believable as a force that could decimate entire communities. Skarsgård worked with an opera coach to lower his voice by an octave, and shed a serious amount of weight ('I think we deserve a scary, smelly corpse again,' smiles Eggers). Looking, sounding and feeling the part, the actor summons a ferocity that is genuinely terrifying.

The story, should you need reminding, has young estate agent Thomas Hutter (Nicholas Hoult) travel to Orlok's Transylvanian castle to gather the Count's signature on some property deeds. This foul yet oddly magnetic recluse is moving to the German city of Wisborg, which is ravaged by plague upon his arrival. Against this backdrop of death and disease, Hutter's fiancée Ellen (Lily-Rose Depp) is targeted to become the companion of Orlok, whose sulphurous spell holds her in thrall.

Eggers' version, a verbose and full-blooded Gothic melodrama, fleshes out the character of Ellen and accentuates the 'love' story. This aspect might remind some viewers of Francis Ford Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, a movie that Eggers watched many times as a child… but with a key difference.

'[*Dracula*] has this extreme love story with Mina – their relationship is quite lovely,' says Eggers of Coppola's 1992 movie. 'Whereas the stuff I was looking to for this film was all demon-lover stories. Stuff like *Wuthering Heights*. The Laurence Olivier version has contaminated everyone's thinking about *Wuthering Heights*, but in the novel, Heathcliff is a fucking asshole psychopath. And as much as he loves Cathy, he's obsessed with her and he wants to destroy her. Ellen's relationship with Orlok is incredibly toxic.'

In this post-#MeToo age, such a take will surely chime with viewers? 'I presume so,' shrugs Eggers. 'I'm not trying to make something with a message, but I don't live in a vacuum, and the things that are around are going to come out in the film.' **JAMIE GRAHAM**

NOSFERATU OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 1 JANUARY 2025.

FOCUS FEATURES. AIDAN MONAGHAN

Pharrell Williams and Chad Hugo in Lego form

EXCLUSIVE

BRICKIN' IT

PIECE BY PIECE Telling Pharrell Williams' life in Lego, Morgan Neville reinvents the doc form...

When Morgan Neville (*Twenty Feet from Stardom*) was approached to make a documentary about musical genius Pharrell Williams, it was never going to be run-of-the-mill. And the man behind mega-hit *Happy* certainly had other ideas. 'What he said to me initially was, "Why don't you make a documentary, and then when you're done, throw out all the images and just replace them with Lego?"' Neville tells *Teasers* over Zoom. The result is *Piece by Piece*, an animated doc that tells Williams' life entirely in Lego form.

Looking like *The LEGO Movie* and other films from this brick-built universe, Neville's doc might just be a reinvention of the form. 'It felt like it at times,' he says. 'I just felt like, "Oh, we were on to something really special."' Still, the film had to feel Lego-like. 'We all wanted it to have the feel of *The LEGO Movie* and live in that universe. Lego has a bible of rules about what you can do in Lego movies. One of the big rules is anything in the movie has to be buildable. You can invent pieces that haven't been made, but they have to be manufacturable.'

When Neville and his team approached the executives at Lego, they were open to this unusual idea. 'They said, "This is definitely not what we would normally do, but we love this and we understand it's going to push us in ways that are probably good for us." So we pushed them on different types of Black, Filipino, Asian skin tones, hairstyles, braids, Caesar cuts, dreads; all these things that they hadn't really done before. And that was super-important to Pharrell.'

'We pushed [Lego] on different types of Black, Filipino, Asian skin tones...'
MORGAN NEVILLE

Morgan Neville directs the unusual documentary

Adding to the glitz, the film includes interviews with Williams' collaborators including Justin Timberlake, Snoop Dogg and Gwen Stefani. 'There was so much love and trust in Pharrell that getting people to talk was not hard,' he says. While nobody objected to the idea of being turned into a Lego character, some were against being used for marketing purposes, initially anyway. 'But after the trailer came out, we got several calls from people saying, "Use us! Use us for marketing and promotion!"'

The big question is what does Williams make of *Piece by Piece*? 'It blew him away in a lot of ways. There's that animation part of it, but there's the part of it where somebody's investigating you forensically in a film. And I feel like Pharrell's whole career, really, as a producer, is holding up mirrors to artists and trying to get them to be creative and vulnerable... but he's always more comfortable, a little bit, as the wizard, right? Behind the curtain. And so my job is to hold a big mirror up to him.' Mission accomplished. **JAMES MOTTRAM**

PIECE BY PIECE OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 8 NOVEMBER

UNIVERSAL PICTURES, FOCUS FEATURES

NEXT BIG THING

POLINA AND SOFIA NABOKI

MARK EYDELSHTEYN IS SMOKING HOT...

Culture is a universal language, so you can speak without words,' states Mark Eydelshteyn, an actor who's broken through more than just linguistic barriers. The chatty 22-year-old Russian is the star of Sean Baker's Cannes-winning *Anora*, playing Ivan, the spoilt son of an oligarch, opposite Mikey Madison's Brooklyn pole dancer. Already dubbed the 'Russian Timothée Chalamet', it won't take long before we're calling him by his name...

How did you get on with Sean Baker when you first met?
We had a connection and it's not a connection on the level of ideas. It's connection on an emotional level. I realised that he can understand my sense of humour; I can understand his. And for me, it's the most important thing – communication between people.

How did you and Mikey work on playing Ivan and Ani?
Mikey is a very professional actress, maybe one of the most professional actors that I've had a chance to work with. And we talked a lot. Ani is very charming. Ani is very kind. And it was our first step to grow out this chemistry.

Did you meet anyone cool in Cannes when the film premiered?
I asked for a cigarette from Vincent Cassel. I asked, 'Can you give me a cigarette?' And then I realised that it was Vincent Cassel, and he said, 'Yes. For you, of course. You can take two or three or five if you want.' And then I smoked this cigarette, and I thought, 'Is it my life really? It's a cigarette from Vincent Cassel!'

Have you always wanted to be an actor?
I didn't think that I wanted to be an actor. I thought that I wanted to be maybe a writer or work with words. But it was random... I just went to Moscow Art Theatre School, and there they said that you can be an actor. You really can be. And I asked, 'Really, you think I can be?' **JAMES MOTTRAM**

ANORA OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 1 NOVEMBER.

J.K. Simmons appears as comedian Milton Berle

EXCLUSIVE

IT'S SHOWTIME

SATURDAY NIGHT Jason Reitman brings the chaotic birth of *SNL* to the screen – in real time...

After launching the careers of countless comedy legends over five decades, *Saturday Night Live* is nothing short of an American institution. Set in and around the corridors, soundstages and back rooms of Studio 8H, 30 Rockefeller Plaza on 11 October 1975, *Saturday Night* is a frantic retelling of the eventful 90 minutes immediately prior to the show's very first broadcast, told in minute-by-minute real time.

'I got to be a guest writer at *Saturday Night Live* back in 2008,' director Jason Reitman tells *Teasers*, speaking from TIFF, where his film has just debuted to acclaim and Oscar buzz. 'And that experience of actually writing a sketch, the final countdown, being on the floor, and feeling the adrenaline as they went live… I knew then I would need to capture it in a film one day.'

Co-written with fellow Ghostbusters scribe Gil Kenan between legacy sequel *Afterlife* and this year's follow-up *Frozen Empire* ('Sony wasn't going to let me go make this until I gave them another Ghostbusters,' the filmmaker notes) and based on dozens of – often contradictory – interviews with those who were there, *Saturday Night* stars *The Fabelmans*' Gabriel LaBelle as *SNL*'s showrunner and totemic creative genius, Lorne Michaels. With the debut show about to go on air, cast member John Belushi (Matt Wood) hasn't signed his contract, the set is falling apart, and the network are betting on Michaels to fail, but that's only the start of the problems.

Shot on a 360°, two-storey set built to the same specifications as the original Rockefeller Center blueprints, and on textured 16mm film, it's a movie that harkens back to immersive 70s cinema like *The Candidate* and *Network*. The biggest challenge, however, was the film's unusual real-time structure, which required meticulous planning.

'Gil and I created this *True Detective* murder board of where everyone was in the building at any given moment,' Reitman says. 'Because it's 90 consecutive minutes, 80 speaking roles… it eventually felt like a dance movie because it was all choreography.'

As well as the world-famous likes of Dan Aykroyd (Dylan O'Brien), Chevy Chase (Cory Michael Smith), and George Carlin (Matthew Rhys), *Saturday Night* features less well-known, but no less important, figures such as Rosie Shuster (Rachel Sennott), Dick Ebersol (Cooper Hoffman) and David Tebet (Willem Dafoe). But if most of those names mean nothing to you, worry not – Reitman also had *SNL* newbies in mind when making the film.

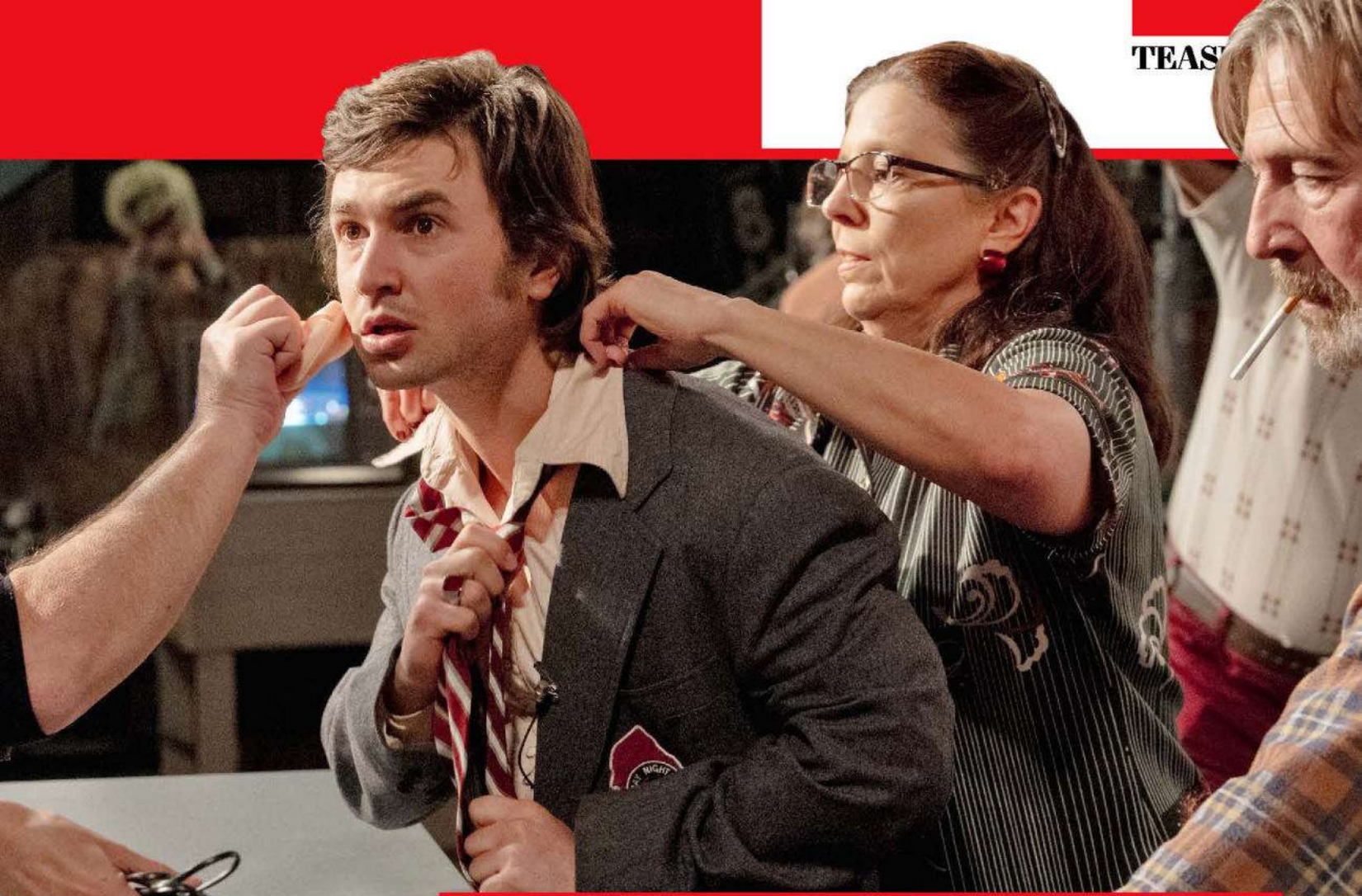
'I'm actually most excited for people who don't know *Saturday Night Live* [to see it],' the director says. 'Because this movie is about generational shift, and the thrill of going live on air. It's a roller coaster of 90 minutes in which you watch a group of young people rip television out of the hands of the last generation and change television forever.' **JORDAN FARLEY**

SATURDAY NIGHT OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 31 JANUARY 2025.

The film captures the (barely controlled) chaos in the *Saturday Night Live* studio

Producer Lorne Michaels (Gabriel LaBelle), actor Jacqueline Carlin (Kaia Gerber) and soon-to-be *SNL* breakout star Chevy Chase (Cory Michael Smith)

'It eventually felt like a dance movie because it was all choreography'
JASON REITMAN



Billy Preston (Jon Batiste) was the show's first musical guest

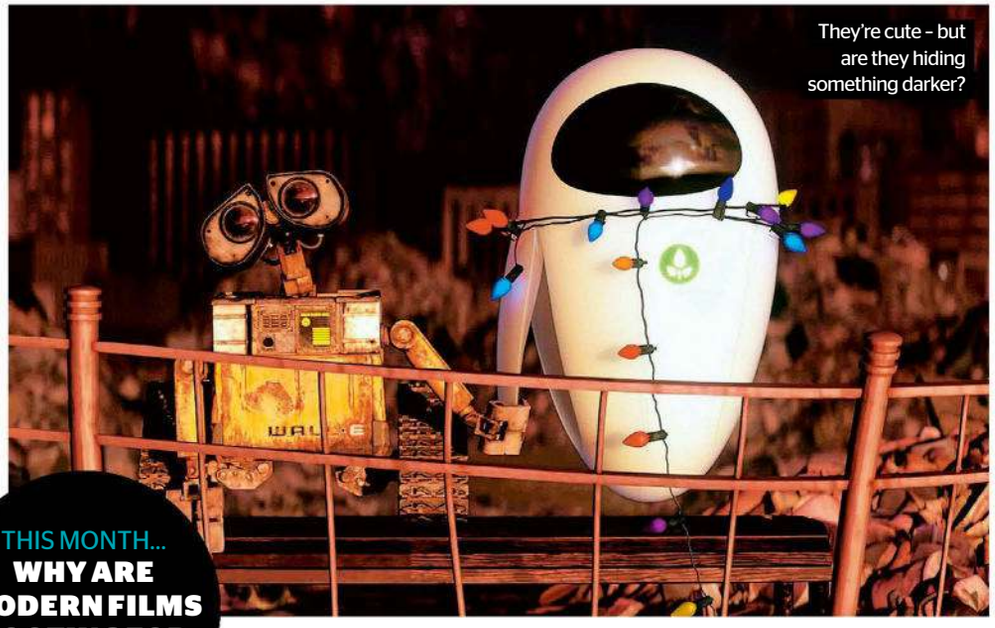
Lamorne Morris as original cast member Garrett Morris

Nicholas Braun plays Jim Henson, whose puppets featured on *SNL*'s opening season

SONY

THE LEILA LATIF WORD

Contributing editor **LEILA LATIF** has something to say...



They're cute – but are they hiding something darker?

THIS MONTH...
WHY ARE MODERN FILMS ROOTING FOR THE ROBOTS?

One of the most fun debates you can have about a movie is deciding who the true bad guy is. I've been convinced to view Ursula as *The Little Mermaid*'s tragic hero and Batman as the ultimate villain. Looking at things from a new angle, you can make anyone a hero. But, alongside dogs and Dick Van Dyke, robots have established themselves as being the good guys in cinema's recent years.

Not all robots, of course. The Maschinenmensch from *Metropolis* and the original Terminator were definitely up to no good. But over the years spent watching *Blade Runner*, *RoboCop*, *The Iron Giant* and *Wall-E*, when a robot appears on screen my Pavlovian response is to root for them. Of late there's been no shortage of noble metal protagonists. Following 2023's adorable AI Alphie in *The Creator*, this year the Transformers returned to save the day, a dog became best friends with a robot in *Robot Dreams* and Lupita Nyong'o voiced Roz, a sweet maternal robot who protects a community of adorable animals from humanity in *The Wild Robot*. And, in my personal opinion, David Jonsson's Andy the android was the true hero of *Alien: Romulus*.

Their popularity is about more than just charming depictions of mechanical characters; sci-fi is about reflecting the anxieties of the environment in which it's made and speculating about the specific path that society's on, and what it could lead to. It's both a mirror and a warning. It's the reason why, during the Cold War, films like *Forbidden Planet* and *The Day the Earth Stood Still* spoke to the fear of invasion and paranoia, and during the 80s *They Live* spoke to fears that capitalism was secretly destroying society. So that begs the question: why, when fear of AI is currently so prevalent, are our movies siding with the robots?

The simplest answer is that the AI has already secretly taken over and are filling cinemas with subliminal messaging to make us more welcoming to our future robot overlords. And while that's 99% a joke, it is notable that they're getting the type of PR you can't pay for on screen. I mean, I'm a human – why am I immediately rooting against the humans? I think one of the reasons for my 'turkey voting for Christmas' approach comes from how reliant we now are on tech. Very little imagination is needed to see how AI could render humanity obsolete.

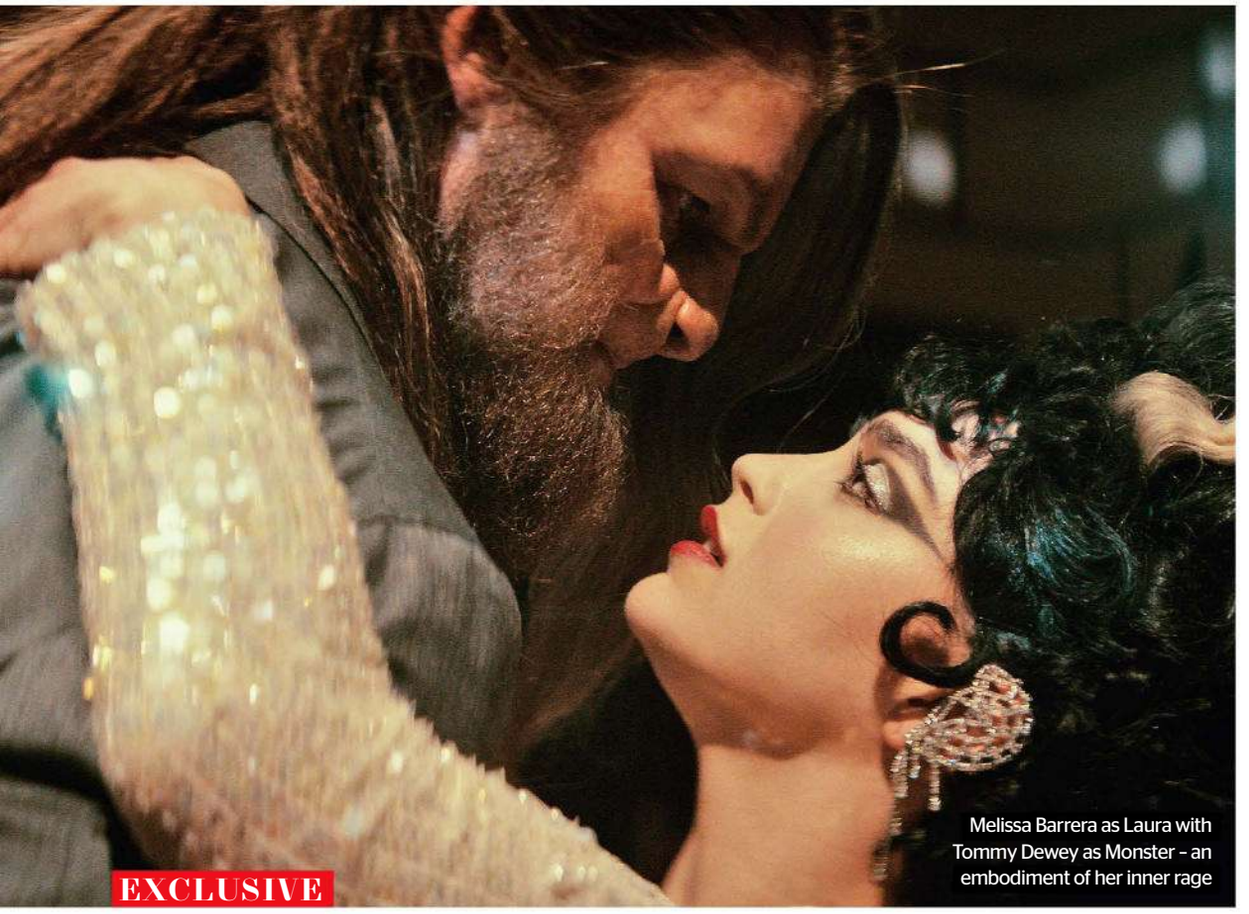
Workplaces and schools have been transformed by ChatGPT, elections are influenced by algorithms, tickets purchased through bots, and when I lost my phone and laptop a few months ago I found myself functionally unable to participate in society. Nowadays the most implausible thing about *The Matrix* is us being able to put up much of a fight if the machines turned on us.

That may be the key to why we make most robots cosy prospects, because in the modern era the boundaries between us feel more nebulous. They are no longer 'the other', and in our everyday lives we treat most new tech with as much suspicion as we do the steam engine. Yet, in 2023, even the famously incautious leaders of Silicon Valley demanded a pause on AI experiments, citing that it can 'pose profound risks to society and humanity'.

Perhaps the reason sci-fi isn't reflecting upon society's robot-based anxiety is because we aren't heeding these warnings and still imagine that WALL-E would never turn on us. It may be time for cinema to embrace some uncomfortable truths and present us with more robots to root against. The power of the movies could foster a little more caution around AI if it wasn't so darn adorable. Failing that, I just hope a nice Terminator takes pity on me.

FOR FURTHER MUSINGS AND MISSIVES FOLLOW @LEILA_LATIF ON X/TWITTER.

ALAMY



Melissa Barrera as Laura with Tommy Dewey as Monster – an embodiment of her inner rage

EXCLUSIVE

MONSTER'S KINK

YOUR MONSTER Melissa Barrera learns to live, laugh and love again with a most unexpected flatmate.

The big C' is a euphemism for cancer, often used to paint a less scary picture of the disease for children. In writer/director Caroline Lindy's debut feature *Your Monster*, cancer and repressed childhood memories are key plot points, though they are intertwined with two other crucial Cs: catharsis and… closets.

Having undergone cancer treatment, actor Laura (Melissa Barrera) recovers at home, while (barely) coping with the fallout of her playwright boyfriend (Edmund Donovan) dumping her while she was in hospital. Indulging in creature comforts, she's soon faced with a creature discomfort: emerging from her closet is a furry, snarky humanoid monster (Tommy Dewey), who's lived with Laura in secret all these years, but now wants the flat to himself. Their reluctant partnership sees 'Monster' help Laura prepare for her ex's new musical, allowing her to bond with an embodiment of her inner rage – and possibly learn to love it.

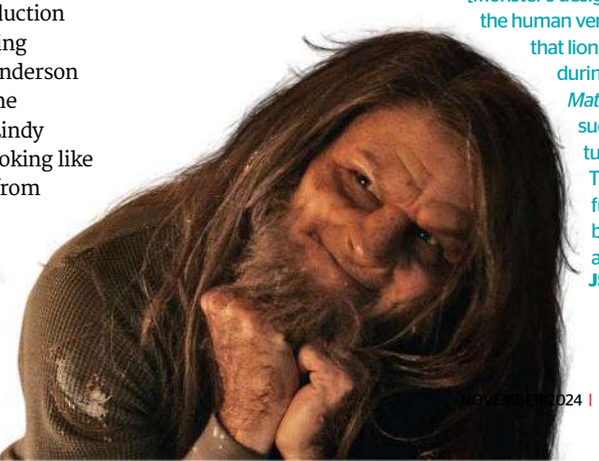
'It's based on when I was diagnosed with cancer and [got] broken up with,' Lindy tells *Teasers* at the Sundance Film Festival in London. 'This is my way of catharsis: making this movie [about] how I wish that someone had told me to get in touch with your monster. I want it to feel like we're pumping up this character. Where we believe she can do it, she can…'

Lindy cuts herself off from spoiling too much, as many of the pleasures of *Your Monster* are rooted in surprises: from character hook-ups to the ways in which unexpected genres bleed into her fantastical rom-com. 'It's like a Nora Ephron film with a sprinkle of *Pan's Labyrinth*,' she says of the tone.

For Monster, the indie production nabbed two-time Oscar-winning make-up artist David LeRoy Anderson (*Men in Black*) to help design the gradually loveable character. Lindy describes their first draft as 'looking like he played in Nirvana. It grew from there. Not the right vibe right away!' **JOSH SLATER-WILLIAMS**

YOUR MONSTER OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 6 DECEMBER.

'It's like a Nora Ephron film with a sprinkle of *Pan's Labyrinth*'
CAROLINE LINDY



VERTIGO RELEASING. WILL STON

Q&A

Melissa Barrera

How was working with a filmmaker who has such a close personal connection to the character?
Even though the story has elements of her life, I wasn't hired to play [Caroline]. But as I spent more time with her, I started stealing little mannerisms that she had. I put more of her in Laura on the go, really.

Did you provide feedback on Monster's design prior to filming?
I did, but long before he ended up looking like that. Originally, I thought the movie was going to lean into horror more. There was a moment where it switched for [Caroline] and she thought, 'No, I want him to be hot. Still a monster, but I want people to think that he's charming and sexy.'

What did you make of the final creature design?
She was trying to create something as unique as possible [that didn't] look too much like this or that. My friend told me that when she saw the movie, it was like she lived out her fantasy of fucking [adult] Simba from *The Lion King*, which was her first crush. [Monster's design] was like the human version of that lion, where during *Hakuna Matata*, all of a sudden, he turns sexy. That was funny but very accurate. **JSW**

EXCLUSIVE

RETURN TO THE SEA

MOANA 2 This sequel lures Moana back to the ocean to save her island once more...

Eight years after *You're Welcome* wriggled its way into our brains and refused to leave, Moana and Maui are returning to the big screen – with Auli'i Cravalho and Dwayne Johnson back to voice the duo. The sequel will take Moana back out to sea to save her island from a new threat, after she restored the mystical heart of Te Fiti in the 2016 musical. A lot has changed since then, including the arrival of a young sister. David Derrick Jr. and Jason Hand, who direct alongside Dana Ledoux Miller, tell *Teasers* all about it.

SISTER ACT

Set three years after the first film, we see that the islanders have become more connected to the ocean. But the biggest change is the arrival of Moana's young sister Simea. Derrick Jr. explains that the relationship is loosely based on the one his own children formed during the pandemic: 'I had never seen a relationship so tight with such a large age gap.' Hand adds that Simea is really at the heart of the story. 'This [film] is about the future of her people, and having a young sister as a representative of this idea of the future.'

HOW FAR SHE'LL GO

What calls Moana to secure her people's future is ultimately a message from the past. 'She receives an unexpected call from a great ancestor, and this is a call that's going to take her further than she's ever gone,' Derrick Jr. says. 'In order to do that, she needed a canoe that could go further, and a crew, and she had to face obstacles like she's never seen before. We're really excited about the antagonist in this one.' Hand teases that the villain is a 'god of storms', adding, 'it's super exciting from a cinematic storytelling standpoint to put Moana up against incredible odds.'

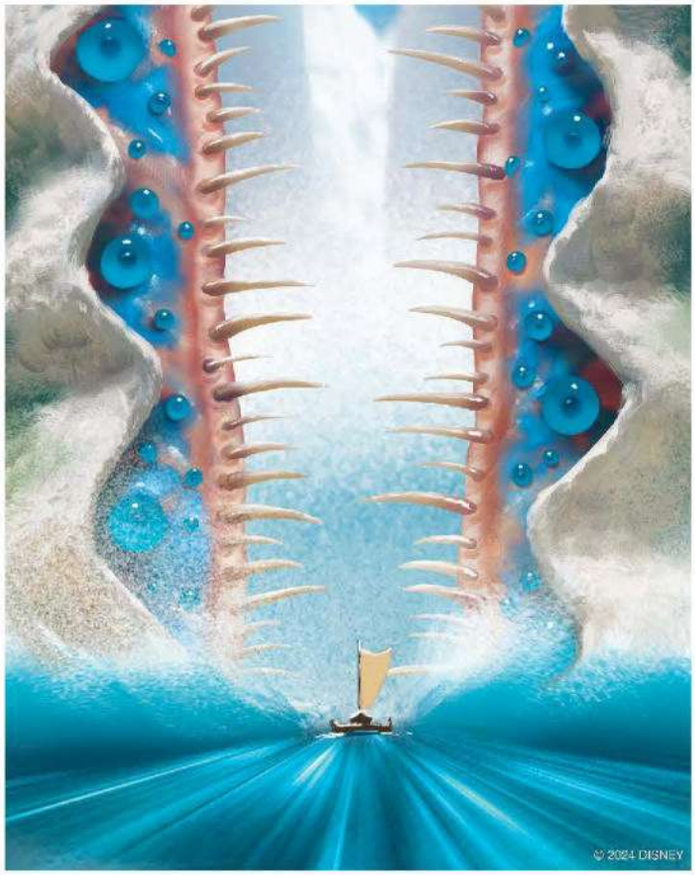
WALT DISNEY ANIMATION STUDIOS. DISNEY ENTERPRISES INC., KEVIN NELSON, RYAN LANG, DANIEL ARRIAGA

DYNAMIC DUO

Returning for this adventure is mischievous demigod Maui, voiced by Dwayne Johnson. While he's much the same, his relationship with Moana has deepened over the three years that have passed. 'There's still the sparkle from the first film, but their relationship has evolved,' Hand explains. 'Moana being in danger is actually a problem for Maui and vice versa. They have to look out for each other because they have grown to care for and respect each other.' We can also expect some 'great songs' that include him – 'I cannot wait for everybody to hear what we've been working on!'

SINGING SENSATION

While the first film has catchy earworms like *Where You Are* and *You're Welcome*, Derrick Jr. says that this sequel has plenty of brilliant songs to rival them. '*You're Welcome* – we have a fun answer for that I can't wait to share.' One of the musical numbers serves as an opening set-piece. '[Moana] sings a song really celebrating who they are all meant to be, that they're back, everybody's in the water. You show everyone, including her dad and mum, and ultimately you're introduced to Simea. And there's a beautiful song in act one that really feels like the answer to *How Far I'll Go*.'



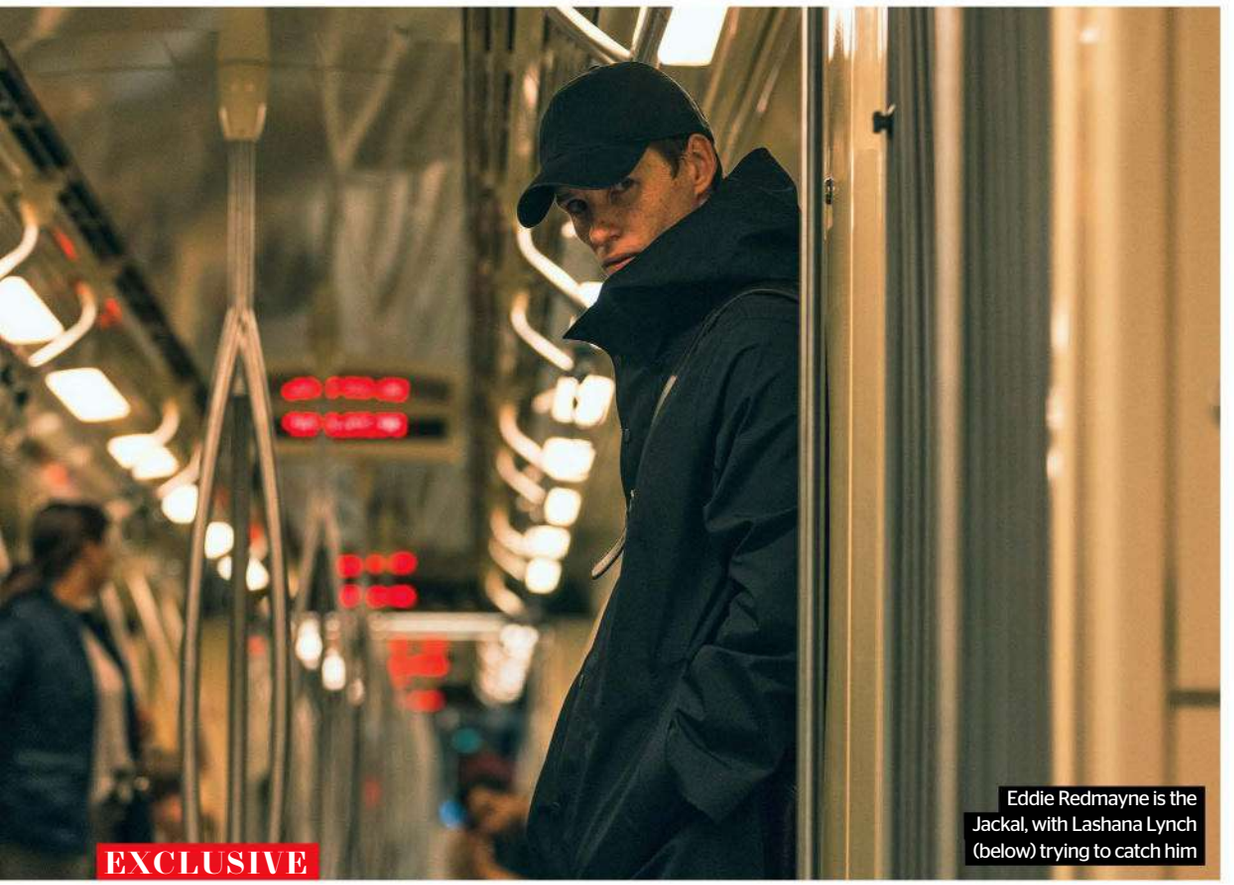
CLAMMING UP

One thing the co-directors wanted for this sequel is to expand the boundaries of Moana's world. Part of making things bigger and better was to design a super-sized obstacle – a giant clam. 'I am obsessed with anything that's gigantic-sized like that!' Hand exclaims. 'We really pushed the scope of the world, and that takes us to all kinds of new places – the clam being one of them. There are a lot of surprises that have to do with that clam that we can't quite give away yet, but there's a lot more to come.'

NEW HORIZONS

It's clear that the crew have really pushed the boat (or canoe) out for this sequel. Originally conceived as a Disney+ series, Derrick Jr. recalls 'a groundswell from everyone working on it that it needed to be on the big screen.' Their wish has been granted, but their ambitions don't stop there. 'There are so many amazing elements to this world that I definitely could see her story continuing,' Hand says of a potential third film. 'It's not currently planned right now, but I think everybody would love to see more Moana.' We'll just have to wait and see how far she'll go. **LAUREN MILES**

MOANA 2 OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 29 NOVEMBER.



EXCLUSIVE

Eddie Redmayne is the Jackal, with Lashana Lynch (below) trying to catch him

CAT AND MOUSE

THE DAY OF THE JACKAL Lashana Lynch pursues Eddie Redmayne's enigmatic assassin...

When producer Brian Kirk was approached to helm a reimagining of Frederick Forsyth's 1971 novel *The Day of the Jackal* (which also became an Edward Fox-led film in 1973), he couldn't say no. Sent the script for the pilot by *Top Boy* writer Ronan Bennett, Kirk was immediately on board. 'He'd kept all the pleasures of the original. There's a great sense of tension released through set-pieces. There's real intimacy and scale, but also an entertainment value, that wish fulfilment of the espionage genre.'

The titular assassin, described by the producer as a 'chameleon', is played in this series by Eddie Redmayne. The *Fantastic Beasts* actor is continuing a run of villainous characters after his memorable turn in 2022's *The Good Nurse*, and he proves here that he can tackle a multifaceted bad guy that shifts forms to blend into a crowd. 'You have a man who's forced to become a sequence of characters,' Kirk says of the Jackal. 'All of which have to stand up to absolute scrutiny in order for him to get through the story and therefore, they all have their own reality in a way.'

Redmayne's assassin takes on the task of picking off a political figure. While he's trying to pull off the job, he's pursued by Lashana Lynch's MI6 agent Bianca, who becomes fixated on catching him to the detriment of all else. 'Ultimately, her singularity of focus becomes an obsessiveness. With her and the Jackal, she understands how he thinks better than anyone else. She's running headlong after him but she's also bringing other people into danger as she does that.'

That obsessive dynamic between hunter and hunted evokes some of the most celebrated crime thrillers, such as Jonathan Demme's *The Silence of the Lambs*. Kirk sees the morally grey nature of it as one of the series' biggest draws. 'The hunter/hunted dynamic on paper is about one eliminating the other, but actually, if the relationship is profound, they almost become codependent.' **LAUREN MILES**

THE DAY OF THE JACKAL PREMIERES ON SKY AND NOW ON 7 NOVEMBER.

'You have a man who's forced to become a sequence of characters'
BRIAN KIRK

SKY GETTY

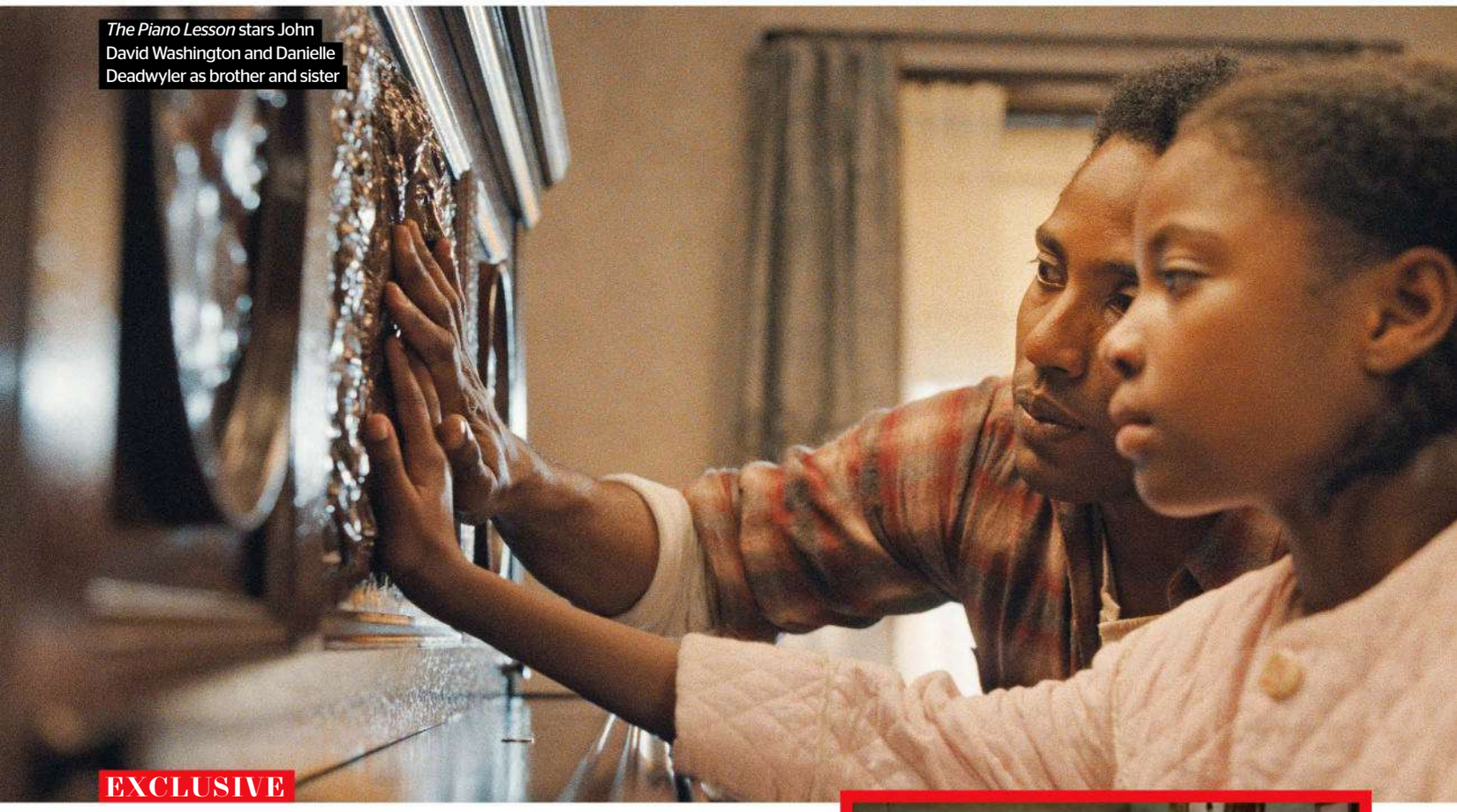
Q&A

Eddie Redmayne

With the Jackal having so many facets, was it hard to get into his mindset?
Normally I try to place myself in the characters that I play; you're reaching out to the character. Whereas this, I ended up going, 'OK, this guy, in order to pass, he's a mimic. He speaks these languages, he creates these characters.' He's basically an actor, so in the end I said, 'What if I was this person trying to live this double life?' Oddly, I ended up bringing the character closer to me.

How would you describe the dynamic between Bianca and the Jackal?
They couldn't be more different, and yet share so many qualities. The top one is obsession, and compulsion, and perhaps addiction in some ways. The framework of the piece was so curious because they so rarely meet, and yet they're on this one-way route towards each other.

What was it like producing this series alongside Lashana Lynch?
She has an extraordinary wealth as a producer – a knowledge of music, a knowledge of the edit. There's a forensic quality. Both of our characters in this are quite granular and micromanaging. I think they cast well in the sense that I think we probably share those qualities! **LM**



The Piano Lesson stars John David Washington and Danielle Deadwyler as brother and sister

EXCLUSIVE

A FAMILY HEIRLOOM

THE PIANO LESSON Malcolm Washington's feature debut is all about family...

When Malcolm Washington came across the play his brother was about to take to Broadway, his interest went far beyond the familial. 'It was one of those things where everything kind of just lines up for you,' he says. '[There was] that feeling for me, like when you come across a certain piece of music or something: "You're talking about me right now."'

Corey Hawkins joins the cast as preacher Avery

August Wilson's Pulitzer-winning tale opens with a 1911 piano theft, before jumping to Pittsburgh in the aftermath of the Great Depression. Boy Willie (John David Washington, *Tenet*, *The Creator*) and Berniece (Danielle Deadwyler, *Till*, *The Harder They Fall*) are at loggerheads over their musical heirloom. He wants to sell it and buy up the Mississippi land their family once toiled upon as slaves; his sister, haunted by the ghost of the land's recently deceased owner, wants it to stay put.

'The thing that stuck most with me was this concept of our ancestors and the fact that you can be afraid of [that legacy],' Malcolm says. 'You can be fearful of something that ultimately is there to support you, that's there to hold you down, and a force that you don't see that's conspiring in your favour.'

Reprising the role from his 2022 Broadway debut, the elder Washington's Boy Willie is a whirlwind of energy. 'He's a character that, especially on the page, can be a bit brash and singular,' his brother explains. '[But] the way John David plays it… He's operating from this place of deep, deep hurt and feeling unheard and unlistened to. He's somebody who thinks he's acting for the betterment of the family, and everybody is standing in his way.'

The quieter heart of the film, however, is Deadwyler's Berniece. Following the actor's extraordinary performance as a bereaved civil rights activist in 2022's *Till*, the part is one of the few that isn't a reprisal from the Broadway production.

'Danielle was somebody I've been a fan of for a while,' Malcolm says. 'As soon as she stepped in, the chemistry in the room changed. [It was the] same with Corey Hawkins [who plays preacher Avery], who was new to this as well. It was like, "OK, the movie's complete. We have our people."'

'You can be fearful of something that ultimately is there to support you'
MALCOLM WASHINGTON

Adapting a Pulitzer-winning play for the screen was no small challenge. Careful deployment of Frank Ocean and Fela Kuti gives the soundtrack a modern touch, but the key, according to the director, was to leave plenty of Wilson's work intact.

'This stuff is great for a reason,' he says, 'and we're here to honour that as well. It was trying to walk that tightrope, keeping the essence of it, and wanting to make something that I hope Mr. Wilson could look at and be proud of.' **JAMES HARVEY**

THE PIANO LESSON STREAMS ON NETFLIX FROM 22 NOVEMBER.

NETFLIX, DAVID LEE

5 THINGS

INFECTION CONTROL

GENERATION Z A virus causes the elderly to go mad in Ben Wheatley's new show...

1 IT'S INSPIRED BY GEORGE A. ROMERO

Ben Wheatley's series begins with the accidental release of a mysterious virus – one that just so happens to turn the elderly population of the fictional town of Dambury violent with a hunger for flesh. 'It's got the DNA of classic zombie stuff like *Dawn of the Dead*, but it's also got the DNA of disaster movies of the 70s,' the director says, though he's quick to point out that there aren't actual zombies to be found here. 'No one's dead, so it's more like Romero's *The Crazies*.'

2 IT WAS DEVELOPED PRE-PANDEMIC

A virus that disproportionately affects the elderly? Where have we heard that before? Strangely, Wheatley began work on the show in 2019, before COVID-19 entered the public consciousness. 'What was weird about it is the script predicted a lot of the COVID stuff,' Wheatley explains. 'A lot of the stuff that's still in there where you go, "That's very COVID-ey," was already in there.' He found that only added to the project's appeal. 'Before it had been predictive science-fiction, but now it's something that everyone has experienced.'

3 THERE ARE THREE GENERATIONS OF CHARACTERS

Left to deal with the effects of the virus are the town's teenagers – namely leading trio Kelly (newcomer Buket Kömür), Charlie (Jay Lycurgo) and Stef (Lewis Gribben). While the show focuses predominantly on them and the infected, stuck in the middle are those adults who are too young to be affected by the virus. 'I wanted to have the three groups of the Boomers, Gen Z and Gen X,' Wheatley says. 'Gen X are just generally panicking and the other two groups form into gangs.'

'Gen X are just generally panicking and the other two groups form into gangs'
BEN WHEATLEY

Jay Lycurgo and Lewis Gribben play teens Charlie and Stef

4 IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT ZOMBIES

Part of what the director likes about horror and sci-fi is that 'you can talk about stuff metaphorically, without bashing people over the head'. With *Generation Z* he's tackling an important topic – misinformation. 'They're confronted with this massive situation and they're getting conflicting information,' he explains of the teens' plight, and he believes it's a common one. 'Every day we get this stuff – we're looking at it and going, "Is this true?"'

5 A SECOND SEASON WOULD LEAN INTO SF

With Wheatley hoping for a second season, and with two episodes of it already written, the director is eager to talk about future plans. 'What I want it to be is it changes genre each [season],' he explains. 'I think it sits in this *Quatermass* and *Doctor Who* world, so there's more sciencey places to go with it.' But above all else he wants the focus to remain on the young protagonists. 'It will keep investigating how the younger characters have survived the experience.' **LAUREN MILES**

GENERATION Z STREAMS ON C4 AND WATCH LIVE LATER THIS MONTH.

A mysterious virus only attacks the elderly, giving them a hunger for human flesh

CHANNEL 4. JAMES PARDON

Pioneering photojournalist Margaret Moth is the subject of new doc *Never Look Away*

EXCLUSIVE

CALLING THE SHOTS

NEVER LOOK AWAY Lucy Lawless directs a bio-doc about a trailblazing camerawoman...

Many an established actor who's moved behind the camera will tell you that directing is a career path they've long wanted to follow. Not so with Lucy Lawless. 'It looked like such a crappy job to me,' she tells *Teasers*. 'In drama on television, they're just clock-watching and compromising themselves. I never wanted to do it!'

So, why then has the versatile actor – known for several TV hits (*Battlestar Galactica*, *Spartacus*, *Parks and Recreation*) but especially for her iconic role as *Xena: Warrior Princess* – decided to make her directorial debut with documentary *Never Look Away*? 'I couldn't pay somebody to care about it in the way that I did. Margaret Moth just possessed me for a couple of years.'

Lawless' fellow New Zealander Margaret Moth was an award-winning photojournalist. She would travel to the heart of the most dangerous conflicts in the world, including the Persian Gulf War and the Bosnian War, willingly throwing herself into the heat of the action to tell the stories of victims of war, so that the world couldn't ignore them. When back in civilian life, her appetite for adrenaline involved much hedonism – as described by friends, lovers and family members, who share sometimes uncomfortable details.

'The movie belongs to the viewer,' Lawless tells us. 'They get to make up their minds about who's a reliable witness, who Margaret is, whether she was good, bad, how they interpret the value of her life. My duty is not to put any spin on anything. In that way, her peccadilloes become your problem, and her value is as per your judgement.'

'I hope she'll inspire a whole new generation'
LUCY LAWLESS

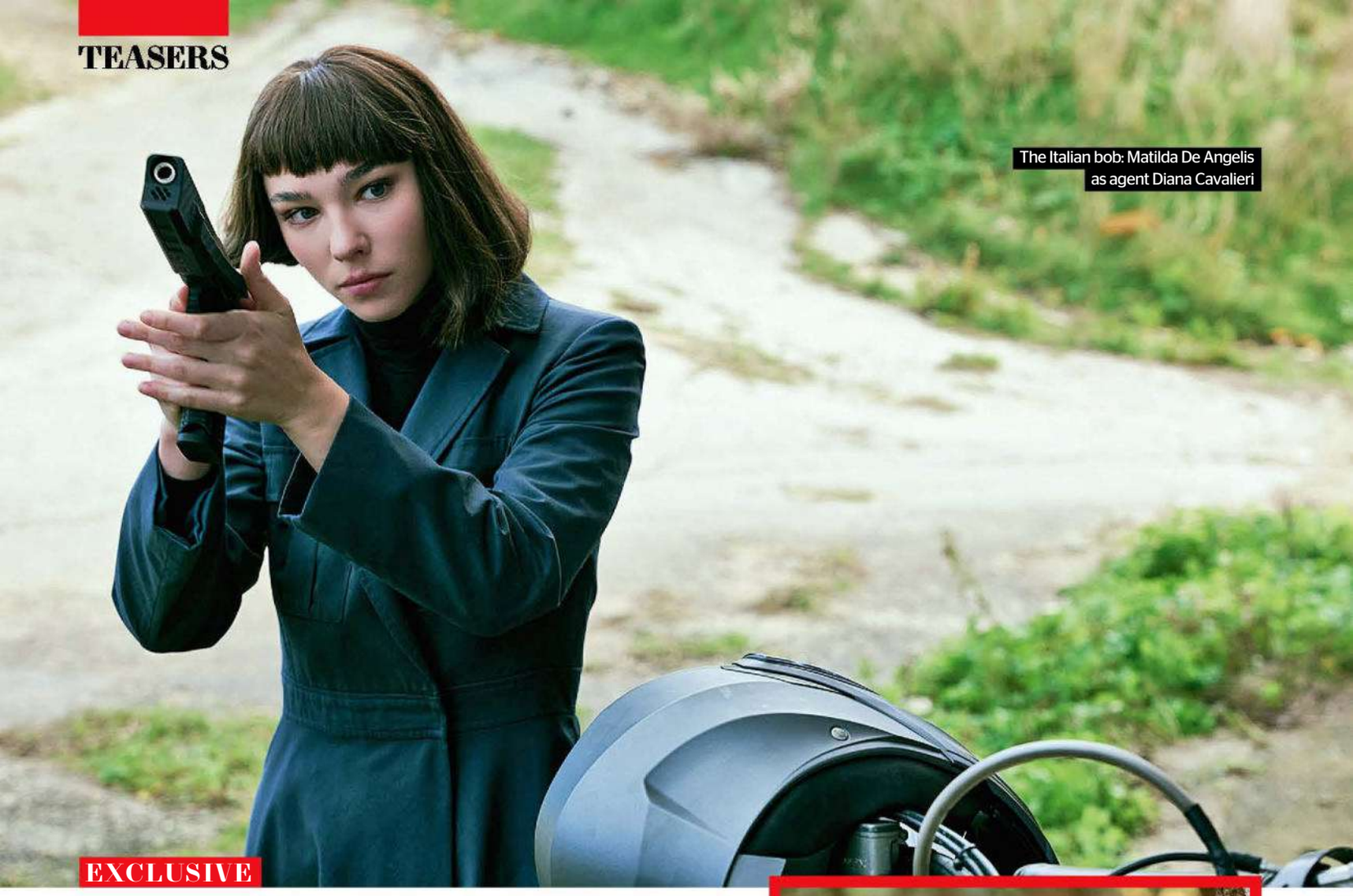
Actor Lucy Lawless directs her debut feature

In 1992, Moth was shot and severely wounded while filming in Sarajevo. Considerable damage was done to her face and body, and her speech became permanently slurred. Returning to conflict reporting not long after, she became a global news story herself. 'And now,' says Lawless, 'I hope she'll inspire a whole new generation of aspiring journalists, camerapeople, to go tell the truth in their communities, whatever it is; whoever it is.

'[Photojournalism] is besmirched these days,' she continues, 'because there's such a lack of faith in media [...] that people discount the credible sacrifices that legitimate journalists like Margaret make. One happy by-product of this film is it's making people think about the cost of news gathering. Margaret was just one of a long series of people who have been maimed or killed as they try to get word out about the truth of what's going on. It's wonderful that we have citizen accounts with smartphones these days, but these people still add great value. They're crucial to a healthy society as truth tellers.' **JOSH SLATER-WILLIAMS**

NEVER LOOK AWAY OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 22 NOVEMBER.

COURTESY OF SUNDANCE INSTITUTE. MARC WEAKLEY. CEREAL TV



The Italian bob: Matilda De Angelis as agent Diana Cavalieri

EXCLUSIVE

I, SPY

CITADEL Classified intel on spin-off shows *Citadel: Diana* and *Citadel: Honey Bunny*...

The Russo brothers' spyverse Citadel is about to blow up exponentially as the global espionage saga careens down a rabbit hole via two new series: *Citadel: Diana* is a 2030-set Milan-based thriller forking off from the events of *Citadel*; *Citadel: Honey Bunny*, a 1990s India-set prequel, tells the story of a young Nadia Sinh, Priyanka Chopra's character in the original drama.

The Citadel continuity spreads around the world

All this while the wider creative team – which includes Russo sister Angela Russo-Otstot as an executive producer – shoots Season 2 of the parent series. That's a lot to chew on, especially when all the shows are connected and have a tendency to jump around in time.

'We're doing something that's never been done before, and we're really proud of it,' Russo-Otstot tells *Teasers*. Each new series links to the main show in various ways – such as through the larger mythology and connections in the organisations – while more spin-offs are planned for other countries.

So what's distinct about *Diana*? 'We're in a really beautiful, slick, modern world where the stakes of Italy as a country have been altered by the hold of [criminal syndicate] Manticore,' the executive producer explains. After Diana's parents are killed, she's drawn into the world of Citadel when she's recruited for an undercover operation in which she becomes entwined with shady arms manufacturers. Technology has moved on apace since the events of *Citadel* Season 1 as well.

'Since the fall of Citadel, it's as if Manticore were able to use all of the resources they have to take Citadel's tech and rapidly evolve it. The fun of the Italian series is really wondering, "What is it that Diana [Matilda De Angelis] is truly after?"'

Diana, with its high stakes and gravitas, is more serious in tone than *Citadel: Honey Bunny*, which is a bit lighter. 'There's a throwback feel to it,' says Russo-Otstot. '[Showrunners] Raj & DK have a specific tone and style that they're working in as they explore this family of spies in the 1990s. We're travelling through Nadia's youth and telling the story of her parents [played by Varun Dhawan and Samantha Ruth Prabhu]. It's quite a fun exploration, [with] moments of levity, and a lot of gritty, really well-executed action.'

'We're doing something that's never been done before, and we're really proud of it' ANGELA RUSSO-OTSTOT

Will *Diana* and *Honey Bunny* play into the second season of *Citadel*? Yep. 'Each of our characters, even though it's a bit of a direct pickup from our first season – you will find them in very unexpected places,' she teases. 'I think people will be quite surprised by the behaviours and decisions they make based on their new circumstances.' Curiouser and curiouser. **KIM TAYLOR-FOSTER**

CITADEL: DIANA IS STREAMING ON PRIME VIDEO NOW. CITADEL: HONEY BUNNY STREAMS ON PRIME VIDEO FROM 7 NOVEMBER.

PRIME VIDEO

100

MOST COVERS FOR ONE ISSUE
(*TF* 265)

13

NON-HUMAN COVER STARS

MOST POPULAR COVER CHARACTER
JAMES BOND
(13, PLUS 21 COVERS ON ISSUE 139)

TOTAL FILM IN NUMBERS

£1

COVER PRICE OF ISSUE 1
(INTRODUCTORY OFFER: REGULAR PRICE £2.50)

27

YEARS SINCE THE FIRST ISSUE
(FEBRUARY 1997)

5

DIRECTORS ON THE COVER

20

PAGES FOR OUR BIGGEST-EVER COVER FEATURE, FOR *DUNE* (2021)

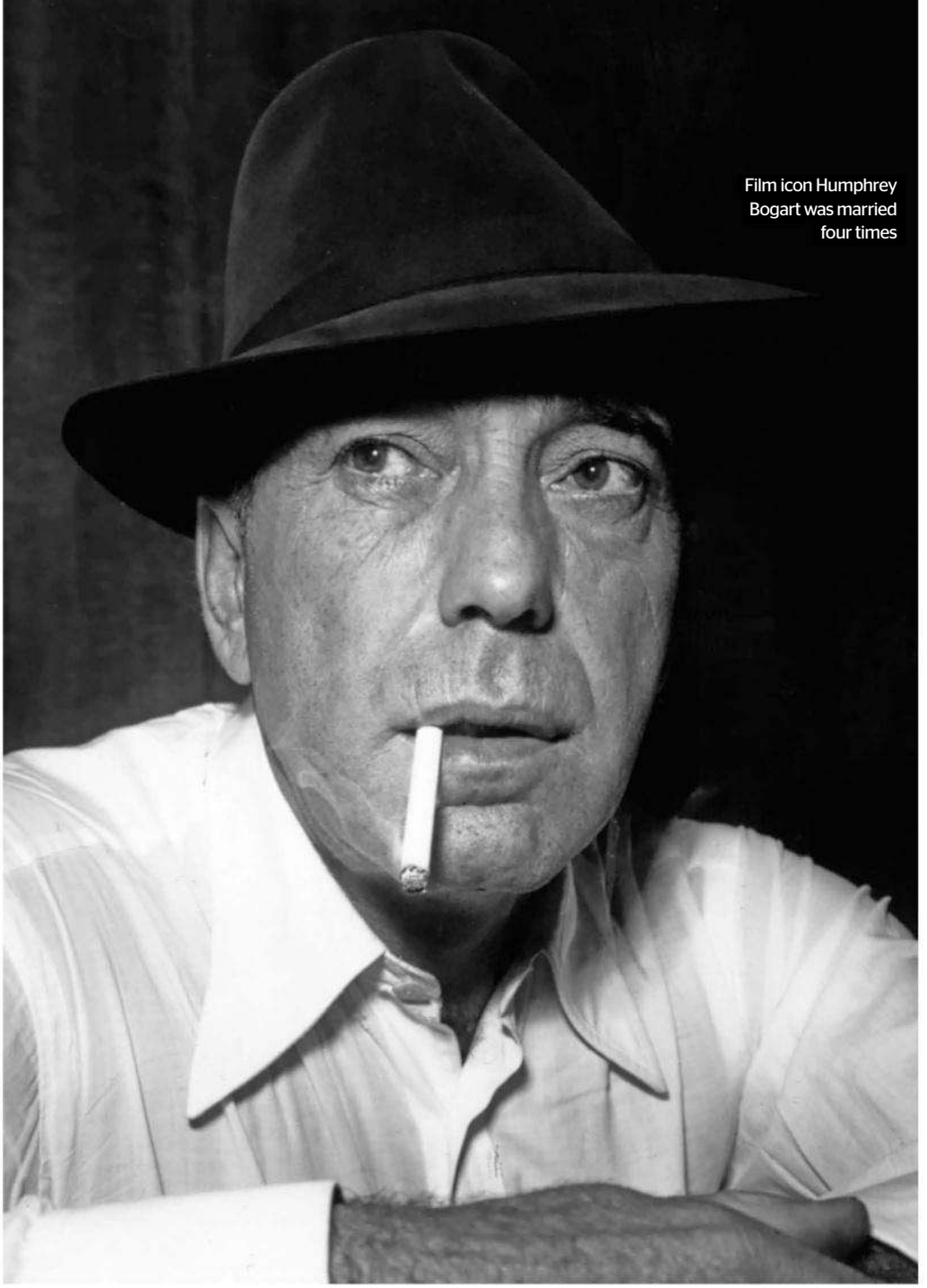
MOST FREQUENT COVER STARS

TOM CRUISE **15**
DANIEL CRAIG **10**
CHRIS HEMSWORTH **10**
ROBERT DOWNEY JR. **9**
SCARLETT JOHANSSON **9**
JOHNNY DEPP **8**
CHRIS EVANS **8**
MATT DAMON **7**
HUGH JACKMAN **7**
DWAYNE JOHNSON **7**
ANGELINA JOLIE **7**
BRUCE WILLIS **7**
CHRISTIAN BALE **6**
JENNIFER LAWRENCE **6**
KEANU REEVES **6**

21

BEST PICTURE NOMINEES FEATURED ON THE COVER OF *TOTAL FILM*

GETTY



Film icon Humphrey Bogart was married four times

EXCLUSIVE

HUMPH DAY

BOGART: LIFE COMES IN FLASHES

Behind every great man is a great woman. Or in Humphrey Bogart's case, four great women...

Kathryn [Ferguson, director] called and said, "I want to make a documentary on your father," and I thought, "Well, if it's gonna be the same old, same old, I don't want to fall asleep,"' says Stephen Bogart, only son of 40s and 50s film icon Humphrey. 'But when she came out with the premise of telling it with my father's voice and through the lives of the women that he loved, that intrigued me.'

Everyone knows about Lauren Bacall, who Bogart met on Howard Hawks' 1944 classic *To Have and Have Not*. He was 44, she was 19, but their chemistry sizzled both on screen ('You know how to whistle, don't you, Steve? You just put your lips together and blow') and off (she became his fourth wife, until his death in 1957). But before 'Bogie and Bacall' there was Bogie and Helen Menken, Bogie and Mary Philips, and Bogie and Mayo Methot, with each of these three actors playing a vital role in shaping the man and his career.

Stephen, 75, narrates his father's own words in Ferguson's fascinating doc, *Bogart: Life Comes in Flashes*. Bogart's musings ('I really don't understand why actors can't have human frailties like other people') are complemented by spectacular archive footage, much of which peeks behind the Hollywood curtain.

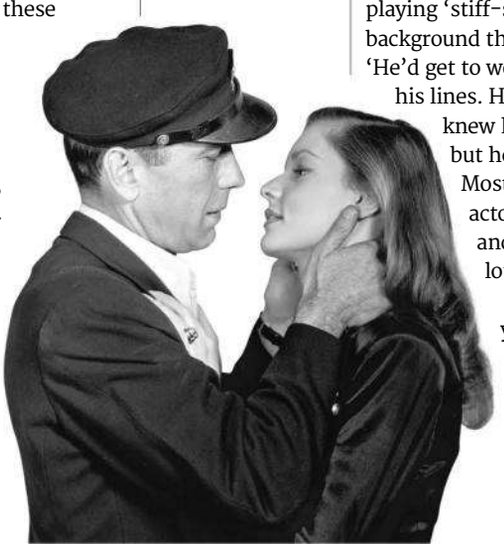
'I don't think success changed him at all'
STEPHEN BOGART

'I don't think success changed him at all,' says Stephen, who was born in 1949, by which time *The Maltese Falcon*, *Casablanca* and *The Big Sleep* had elevated Humphrey from an unremarkable career on Broadway and playing 'stiff-shirted smoothies' and background thugs in dozens of movies. 'He'd get to work on time, he'd know his lines. He was an actors' actor. He knew he was a star, obviously, but he didn't act like that. Most of his friends were not actors. Frank [Sinatra] was, and Spencer [Tracy], but a lot were writers, directors.'

As for his parents' yawning age gap, Stephen simply says, 'My mother didn't act like a 19-year-old. She was an old soul. The age difference didn't matter because they were in love.' He's more interested in the question of whether film stars like his dad still exist in Hollywood today, and how Bogie would fare in today's landscape.

'Tom Cruise is a star,' he says. 'Angelina [Jolie]'s a star. My father, because he was such a fine, nuanced actor, I don't think he would have...' He muses. 'He realised it was about the writing. Unlike today, where everything is chasing a serial killer. If my father had grown up in the Marvel universe, it would have been a lot tougher.' He shakes his head. 'There's too much crap to go through. Social media is a scourge. My father liked to play chess. He liked to *meet* people.' **JAMIE GRAHAM**

BOGART: LIFE COMES IN FLASHES WILL BE RELEASED ON DIGITAL PLATFORMS ON 9 DECEMBER.



BISON ARCHIVES, CINECLASSICO/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

Lola Petticrew and Hazel Doupe play real-life IRA members Dolours and Marian Price

FX. ROB YOUNGSON

FIRST WORD

TROUBLED TIMES

SAY NOTHING This limited series follows the lives of young people during The Troubles...

It was quite funny,' director Michael Lennox (*Derry Girls*) recalls of discovering Patrick Radden Keefe's book *Say Nothing: A True Story of Murder and Memory in Northern Ireland*. 'Someone told me there was this guy who had written a book about the Northern Irish conflict. And my first response was, "I'm not reading this." And I found out he was an American journalist, and I was like, "I'm definitely not reading it."' But he did, nonetheless, read it.

An accounting of the abduction and murder of single mother Jean McConville during The Troubles, it also tells the tales of young IRA members Dolours and Marian Price (played in the series by Lola Petticrew and Hazel Doupe), Brendan Hughes (Anthony Boyle) and Gerry Adams (Josh Finan) – though the latter has always denied any involvement with the militant group.

'It shocked me and floored me and challenged me and provoked me in ways I didn't think it would,' Lennox says. When he heard that FX were adapting it for the screen, he just had to get involved. And involved he is, as both an executive producer and the director of the limited series' nine episodes.

'[The book] shocked me and floored me and challenged me and provoked me'
MICHAEL LENNOX

As 'a big advocate of Northern Irish talent', Lennox says it didn't take long to find the show's young cast, who he calls 'actors at the top of their game'. They have brilliant material to work with, too, as the director describes Dolours and Marian's emotional arc. '[They] have been through such a traumatic life… but it really deals with the choices they made during their youth and the long-lasting impact of that.' **LAUREN MILES**

ALL EPISODES OF SAY NOTHING PREMIERE ON DISNEY+ ON 14 NOVEMBER.

SHORT CUTS The latest happenings in movieland...

HERE SHE COMES

Samara Weaving is confirmed to be returning for a sequel to *Ready or Not*: 'I'm all in. I think we're all in. I don't know if we've had our blood handshake, but pretty much,' she said of the film.

GETTY

MAKING HISTORY

Baz Luhrmann's next film is set to be about Joan of Arc. Titled *Jehanne d'Arc*, it's been described as 'the ultimate teenage-girl coming-of-age story, set in the Hundred Years' War'. We look forward to hearing who'll be cast.

GROWING ENSEMBLE

Colman Domingo is set to join Steven Spielberg's next event film. So far it's untitled, but we know the cast also includes Emily Blunt, Colin Firth and Eve Hewson, and is due for release in May 2026.

MEGACONFIDENCE

Francis Ford Coppola's *Megalopolis* has been divisive among critics, but the director himself has an overwhelmingly positive opinion of his project. He took to Letterboxd to give the movie a five-star rating.

Kani Kusruti and Divya Prabha play roommates Prabha and Anu

FIRST WORD

TRIPPING THE LIGHT FANTASTIC

ALL WE IMAGINE AS LIGHT Payal Kapadia's film shows the Mumbai you've never seen...

I mean, there are many Mumbais, but I have one vision of it!' says Payal Kapadia, director of new drama *All We Imagine as Light*. A native of the Indian city, Kapadia has crafted a dreamy tribute to this metropolis, seen through the eyes of two hard-working female nurses. 'Mumbai... for me, it's full of contradictions, as most big cities are,' she continues. 'It's a city where... for women who work, it's a bit easier to navigate than some other parts of India.'

Director Payal Kapadia explores issues of female independence

Telling the story of Prabha (Kani Kusruti) and Anu (Divya Prabha), the film was inspired by Kapadia's own life, when she was in her final year of film school, and two family members were working in different hospitals. 'I ended up spending a lot of time with some nurses there who became my friends. Also I was at a time where it was the end of my film school, and I would be returning to Mumbai to work, so I was thinking a lot about Mumbai and space for women and work and what that means.'

In particular, Kapadia was interested in women in India who strive to be financially independent. 'That doesn't really happen in our country, or, I think, in the subcontinent, because there are all these family ties that don't allow you to make the choices you want to make so easily. So I was trying to question these feminist ideas that we've been told from a western point of view, which don't completely apply to our context. And through having women who are working, I felt that these questions could be explored.'

Remarkably, *All We Imagine as Light* is the first Indian movie in three decades to play at the Cannes Film Festival, where it was selected for official competition earlier this year. While Kapadia recalls plenty of actors and directors showing their support for the film, it was 'super nerve-racking' to see her film play out in the vast Palais. 'You're there in this giant cinema, and you're really worried about how it's going to be. So when people like it, you just feel the relief, and that you didn't get booed!'

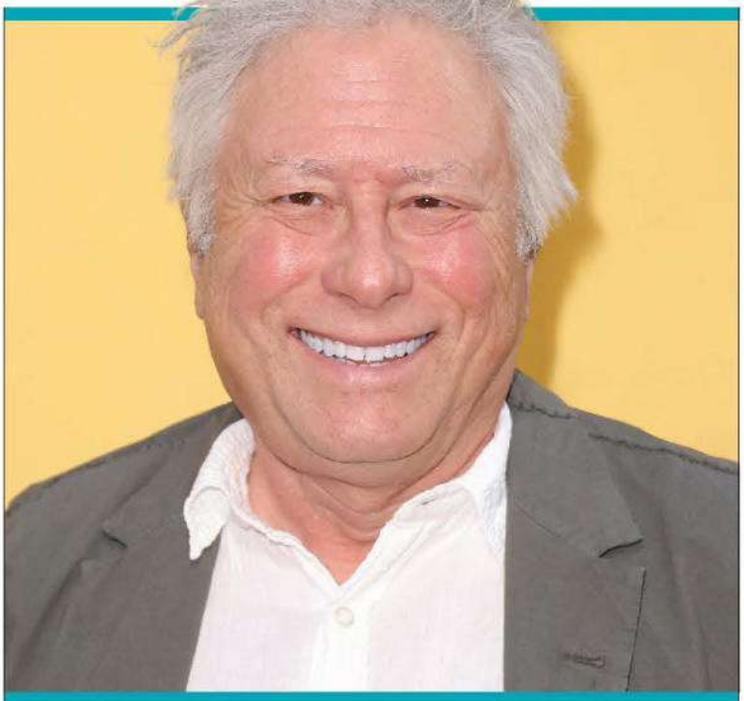
'I was thinking a lot about Mumbai and space for women and work and what that means'
PAYAL KAPADIA

Not only did the film not get booed, it was awarded second place, the Grand Prix, by the jury. It was 'totally bizarre', says Kapadia. 'I had no expectations, but it was like winning the lottery. More than anything else, it helps a lot for a film like this to get seen. I got a distributor in so many countries. And that has been possible because of this prize. So I think it's a great opportunity for a film like this to be shown. I'm really thankful for it.' **JAMES MOTTRAM**

ALL WE IMAGINE AS LIGHT OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 29 NOVEMBER.

BFI

THE HERO



ALAN MENKEN
THE AMERICAN COMPOSER IS ON SONG...

After all the years of doing this, it's ingrained into my rhythms of life,' says Alan Menken, the 75-year-old composer extraordinaire who simply can't stop composing. Renowned for Disney classics such as *The Little Mermaid*, *Beauty and the Beast* and *Aladdin*, the American-born, eight-time Oscar winner is now conjuring up the music for Netflix fairy tale *Spellbound*, starring Rachel Zegler. Hey presto…

How did you approach scoring *Spellbound*?
It's a very world score, if you will. The influences are from so many different areas, because it's a fairy tale in a very mythical kingdom. It's a story of this girl and her parents, and, of course, she's going on an adventure because [her parents are] turned into monsters by an evil spell. But the underpinnings of the story really had such social significance.

How was it working with Rachel Zegler?
She's very talented. Rachel, actually, I saw her on the internet when she was a little girl. She's always been someone that people have had their eyes on, because she's really talented, really loves the form. There are those people who are just destined to come up in the form. I remember knowing Lin-Manuel Miranda as a kid, and you can tell.

Looking back, was working on *Little Shop of Horrors* a key moment?
Little Shop, I would say, is a Rosetta Stone of how you use musical style to tell a story, of how you construct songs to always move story forward. The role of both deep emotion, and also huge entertainment, and how you use people's cultural stereotypes, if you will.

What steered you towards scoring for animations?
When animation came along, it was an amazing time in my life. My daughter had just been born, the Disney VHS tapes of the classics were just coming out, and I would sit with her and watch these classics… I always loved music, but now music was in my mind, wedded to something more specific in terms of story or character or atmosphere. And it just became, whether it was conscious or not, part of my bucket list. And then the opportunity came to work on *The Little Mermaid*. It was my very first film score. I didn't know how to score a film at all, and ironically, it won the Oscar.

One of your most enduring songs is *Aladdin*'s *A Whole New World*. Do you have fond memories of that?
Of course, the success of that song actually eclipsed everything I did before it. It won the Grammy Song of the Year. It won the Oscar. It was a No 1 single. It was crazy. So obviously, I have very fond feelings about that song, and I'm very proud of it.

In total, you've won eight Oscars. How does that feel?
It's very surreal. I think I was the right skill set at the right time. It was an amazing time of reinvention of musicals on film and ironically, I think what may have been one of my very best was when they said, 'OK, enough awards.' That was for *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, which is one of my most ambitious animated scores. But I think people said, 'Eight is enough!'

You did the score for *Sausage Party*, too. How was that?
Unique! I love Seth Rogen. And it was obviously completely filthy and what the public saw was probably cleaner [than the script]! Along the way it was, 'Oh, my God, what will be left to my career after this?' But it was a lot of fun.

Do you have another project underway?
Mostly for the stage. I have a musical of *Hercules*, which will open in London in the spring. I have a new musical of *Animal Farm* in the works… and a musical of *Nancy Drew* and *Night at the Museum*. In the words of Ursula, 'It's what I do. It's what I live for.' I don't know what I would do if I wasn't doing this. **JAMES MOTTRAM**

SPELLBOUND STREAMS ON NETFLIX FROM 22 NOVEMBER.

'*THE LITTLE MERMAID* WAS MY VERY FIRST FILM SCORE... AND IT WON THE OSCAR'

From top: *The Little Mermaid* (1990), *Aladdin* (1992), *Spellbound*

NETFLIX, GETTY, ALAMY

BACK
WITH A
VENGE

FANCE

Sir Ridley Scott returns to the Colosseum with *Gladiator II*, the long-awaited sequel to the greatest historical epic of this century. *Total Film* meets the director and cast to discover how Maximus' legacy is echoing in eternity.

WORDS **MATT MAYTUM**

Ridley Scott is not a filmmaker to repeat himself. It's a trait that's all the more remarkable when you consider how prolific he's been over the nearly five decades since his feature debut, 1977's *The Duellists*. *Alien* prequels *Prometheus* and *Alien: Covenant* are the only times he's gone back to the same world, and those films are radical departures from the original.

While Scott has expressed disappointment at not being able to direct the first sequels to *Alien* and *Blade Runner*, there wasn't a chance he was going to miss out on *Gladiator II*, and a return to the amphitheatres of imperial Rome. 'I thought, "You know, I'm not going to let this go…"' Scott tells *Total Film*, speaking from his LA home a couple of months ahead. 'The first movie really definitely touched the imagination in a way I didn't quite expect. Because when they heard that Ridley is doing a Roman epic – a sword-and-spear-and-sandal movie – there was a lot of sniggering. Because up to that date, they'd always been very, you know, old-style Hollywood. And I knew what to do.'

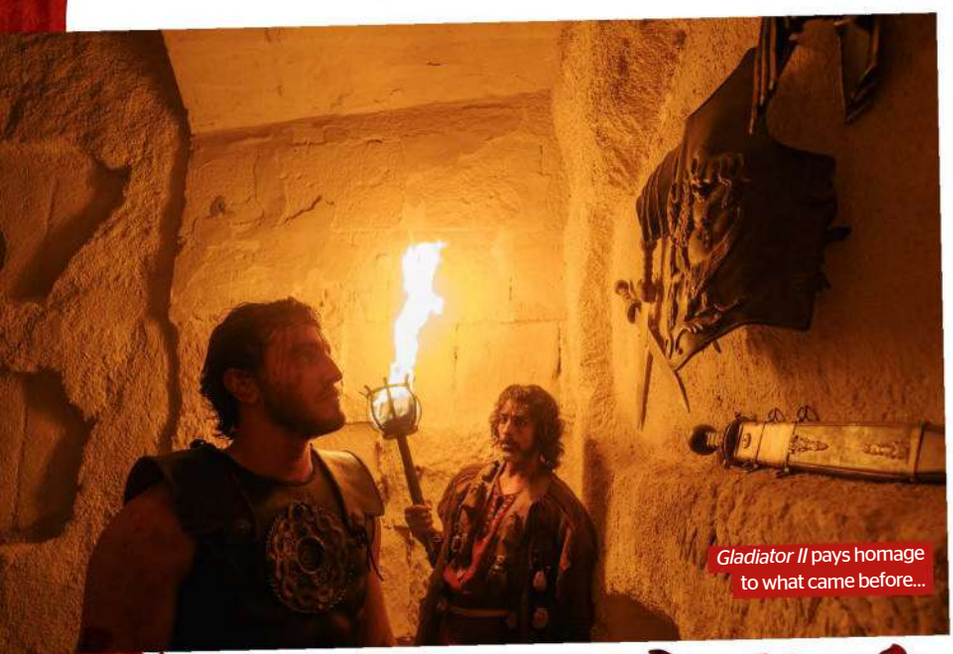
That he knew what to do is an understatement of colossal proportions. *Gladiator* (2000) picked up the Best Picture Oscar, cemented Russell Crowe as a bona-fide star (and Oscar winner), and delivered reams of iconic dialogue that would echo in eternity. 'And from that, I, in a funny kind of way, modernised Roman-epic kind of films,' continues Scott. 'Then, you know, it spawns a lot of other guys in leather skirts and stuff.' On the big screen at least, none of the pretenders could hold a (Roman) candle to the legacy. *Gladiator* sequels were mooted over the years (including a bonkers-sounding, Nick Cave-scripted Maximus-in-purgatory curio), without any ever coming to fruition.

'The biggest challenge is always, still, not the production but the story, and how to get a story that's worthy of telling,' producer Douglas Wick, who also worked on the first film, tells *TF*. 'We had a first movie where everything went right, and that's partly why it took us 25 years to find something that we thought was worth telling.'

Cracking the story was the main obstacle. 'Of course, with all considerations, if you're going to do a sequel, there should be survivors,' says Scott. 'But the obvious survivor would be Connie Nielsen playing Lucilla because [Russell Crowe's] Maximus is dead, and, of course, the Dark Prince of Rome [Joaquin Phoenix's Commodus] is dead. Then it was apparent that if the young Lucius today would be in his mid 20s, [the story would] hang around what happened to Lucius.'

> 'The first movie really touched the imagination in a way I didn't quite expect'
>
> RIDLEY SCOTT

Roman general Marcus Acacius (Pedro Pascal) is the new antagonist


Gladiator II pays homage to what came before...

Beginning with that 'logical idea', the story and screenplay evolved via what Scott describes as a 'day-by-day slog-out at a table, with a writer'. For Scott, it was also essential to return to the grandest theatre of violence, the Colosseum in Rome, for one more film at least. 'If there's a *Gladiator III*, I don't think you'd ever go back into the arena,' he suggests. 'But I had to go back into the arena…'

ABOUT A BOY

Hanging the story on Lucius, the son of Lucilla and grandson of the late emperor Marcus Aurelius (Richard Harris), required the casting of a new leading man (Spencer Treat Clark played the lad in the 2000 film). Having spied Paul Mescal in the TV series *Normal People*, Scott met the Irish rising star for a 30-minute meeting. Mescal estimates that only five minutes were spent

AIDAN MONAGHAN. PARAMOUNT PICTURES

talking about the film, with the remainder on Scott sussing him out. It was all the director needed to make his decision (moving fast is a hallmark of all aspects of his directing). 'I wasn't expecting an offer to come out of it,' laughs Mescal of the meeting. 'I feel very grateful that it did.'

Having been sent away from Rome by his mother following Maximus' death at the end of the first film, Lucius has grown up distanced from his privileged lineage. He comes of age in Numidia, Africa, where he lives a simple existence until the relentless imperial expansion brings Rome to his doorstep. A naval invasion by the Roman army (a grand-scale set-piece that kicks off the movie) brings tragedy, and sees Lucius enslaved, and brought back to Rome where he'll end up fighting for freedom and vengeance, in the name of brutal entertainment for the masses.

Paul Mescal bulked up to star as Lucius

When *TF* asks Mescal if many blockbuster offers had come his way in the time since *Normal People* supercharged his ascent, he admits in his laidback Irish lilt, 'There were a few. It wasn't that I avoided them. They just couldn't compete with something like *God's Creatures* or *Aftersun*. They didn't occupy the same part of my brain.' Making his choices instinctively, Mescal is best known for emotionally raw performances, and *Gladiator II* appealed as his first film of this scale in part because, 'It's not a blockbuster where you just stand in the frame, and the film's happening to you. There's a lot of acting in there as well.' The film puts him through the wringer physically and emotionally.

'If there's a *Gladiator III*, I don't think you'd ever go back into the arena. But I had to go back into the arena'

RIDLEY SCOTT

Acacius leads the Roman invasion of Numidia

The film's rhino battle was initially planned for the 2000 movie, but then had to be dropped

While there's a marked similarity between Lucius' soldier-slave-gladiator arc and Maximus', the sequel isn't a carbon copy of the original. For one thing, there's a very different flavour to the primary antagonist. The focal point of Lucius' revenge is Marcus Acacius (Pedro Pascal) – a decorated Roman general who would've trained under Maximus, and the leader of the Numidia assault. But there's a little more to it than that. (To avoid minor spoilers – previously detailed in promo and trailers – skip to the next subheading.)

Matters are further complicated by the fact that General Acacius is in a relationship with Lucilla. 'The horrible discovery', explains Scott, occurs when prisoner of war Lucius 'walks into the arena, and there, without question, is his mother. And by her side is the guy who he just saw destroy his present life in Numidia… It's lighting a fuse of hatred.'

And, further deepening the connection to the original film, Lucius is also revealed to be the son of Maximus (something that was hinted at in *Gladiator* but never confirmed). When *TF* asks if Scott saw any parallels between Mescal and the young Crowe, he says, 'Not at all. Russell and he have two quite different make-ups.'

> **'I didn't watch *Gladiator* after I was cast, then watched it on New Year's Day with friends, which was amazing'**
>
> PAUL MESCAL

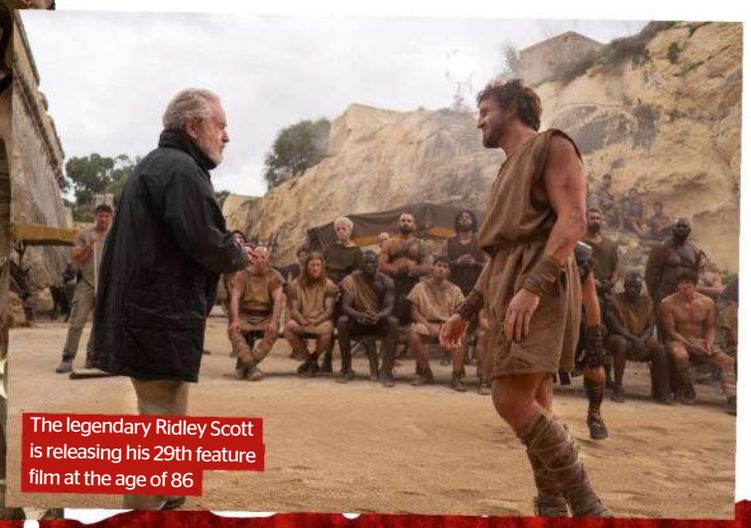
'I think the legacy he's left with that first film is extraordinary,' says Mescal of Crowe. 'I think I was consciously trying to get out of my head, like, the projections that people might have of what this film means. I didn't watch it after I was cast, and then watched it on New Year's Day with my friends, which was amazing… And there's nothing really to be gained [by studying it in preparation] as it's a different character.'

Lucius' complex genealogy adds further dramatic weight to the film's heightened action stakes, where, like the first film, the set-pieces increase in intensity as Lucius' journey continues.

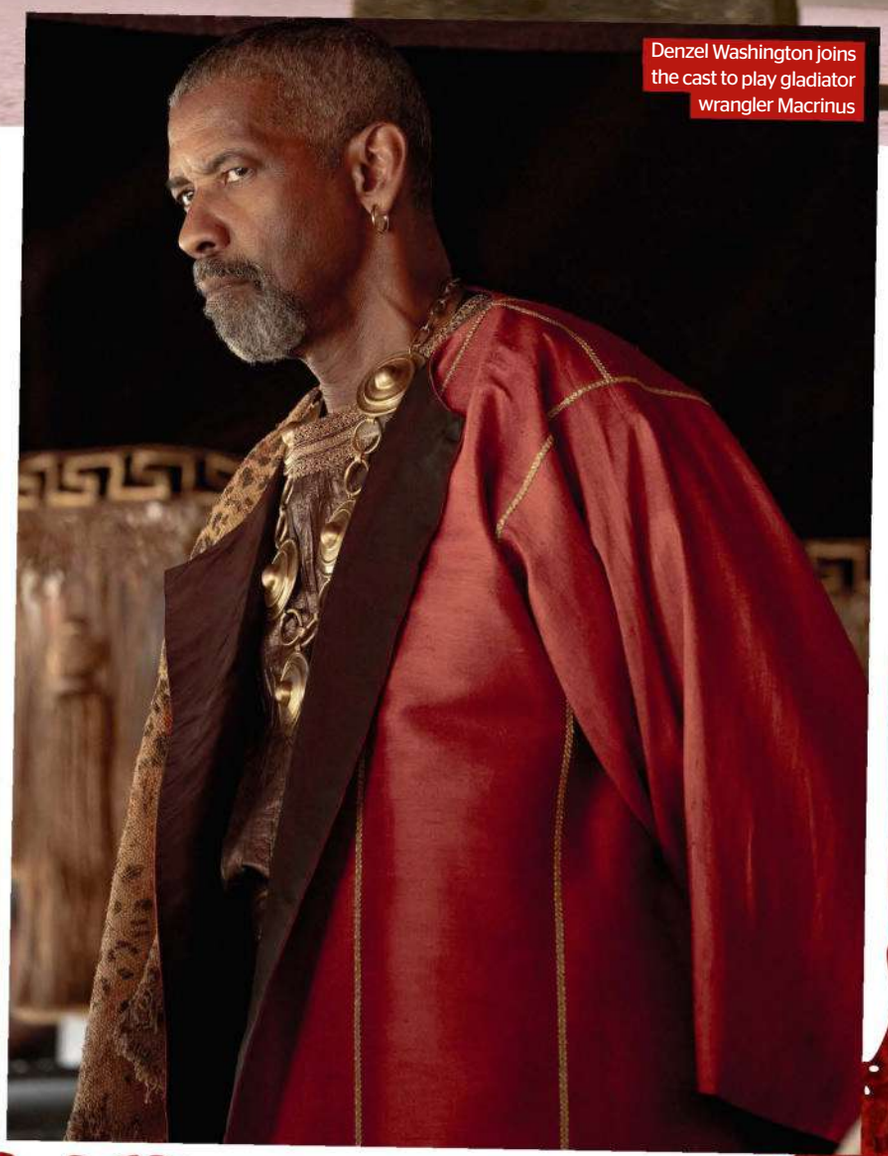
LET'S GET PHYSICAL

Mescal thinks that, in part, his background in Gaelic football helped with the physical demands of the role and

Paul Mescal replaces Spencer Treat Clark, who played Lucius in 2000



The legendary Ridley Scott is releasing his 29th feature film at the age of 86



Denzel Washington joins the cast to play gladiator wrangler Macrinus

intrigued Scott during their meeting. 'There's a physical robustness that comes with playing Gaelic football that is nowhere near what the Colosseum would have been like,' says Mescal. 'But it's understanding how to use your body, and I just loved kind of throwing myself around.' The sport made him, he says, 'used to hitting the ground and bouncing back up again'.

It was also helpful for the sequences where Lucius needs to make rallying speeches to his fellow arena contenders. 'It reminds me of being in a dressing room,' he says. 'It felt somewhat familiar. There's just something about commanding the attention of other people that is very adrenalising.'

There was, however, the obligation to pack on muscle for the role. 'It's quite easy to add 10lbs of muscle if you're going to do it,' says Scott. 'So it's partly medical, a lot of exercise, and a lot of commitment. So he put on quite a lot of muscle, and he's already lost it.'

When *TF* asks Mescal if it is, in fact, quite easy to gain that muscle, he grins. 'Look, it's definitely easier putting it on – for the record, it was 18 [lbs]. I had to then lose a lot of that for the film that followed *Gladiator* very quickly. That was much harder and not as fun!'

Much like Maximus before him, Lucius finds himself competing in staged bouts of growing scale. An early test of his abilities comes in the form of a men-v-baboons fight. While the feral creatures will be CG on screen, Mescal wrestled with a real guy in a leotard. 'There wasn't motion capture, weirdly,' he explains. 'I think they just did some sort of genius [VFX] thing that was way above my pay grade to talk about. I don't know how they did it.'

'I've got a troop of 12 baboons who are carnivorous,' says Scott. 'Trust me, these are real. And they look

THE EMPERORS' NEW GROOVE #1

Joseph Quinn is Geta

What are your memories of watching *Gladiator*?
I remember watching it – I think I must have been 11 or 12 – and being completely transported to this world with incredible performances and masterful direction. I felt very grateful at getting the opportunity to kind of get back in there with Ridley, and this extraordinary ensemble.

So what was it like working with Ridley?
It's extraordinary, the force that's contained within him. He's just a force of nature. It certainly felt like an interesting one to get into it with him on – going back to previous ground, and maybe having unfinished business in the Colosseum. It was very exciting.

How did you build the bond with Fred Hechinger, who's playing your character's brother?
I think a lot of it in this thing that we call 'work' is trust. Building trust takes a little bit of time. Sometimes it's less than others. But I think myself and Fred just spent a lot of time together, and were wanting to take risks, and allowed each other the permission to just turn it up a little bit, really [laughs]. We wanted to just go for it.

And next, you're working with Pedro Pascal again on *The Fantastic Four: First Steps*.
He's a wonderful man. He's a good friend. I remember talking to him in the hiatus about the potential of doing *The Fantastic Four*. He was telling me how excited he was for me to do it. It transpired that he was in talks to do it as well. Not that he concealed that from me. But then that started moving his way, and we were talking about it, and the potential of it, and the prospect of kind of working together again. It's one we were both excited about. He's a very funny, talented man. We're having a good time. **JANE CROWTHER**

With Commodus long gone, Geta (Joseph Quinn) now rules the empire with brother Caracalla

'Macrinus is a bit of a nasty fellow, which I found interesting... I was all in'

DENZEL WASHINGTON

real.' Due to advances in VFX, 'You're staring at 12 real baboons and a real rhino, and a massive water battle with sharks in the water in the Colosseum.'

Among the show-stopping staged battles is a rhinoceros face-off, upping the ante on the first film's tiger scrap. 'CG allowed us to do things we couldn't do on the first,' explains producer Wick. 'We wanted to have a rhinoceros on the first movie. I remember talking to the trainers because it was too expensive to do it just with CG, and they explained, among other things, that once you've got a rhino moving, you couldn't stop it.'

While the finished beast will be a computer-generated creation on screen, again the nature of Scott's staging gave Mescal plenty to work with. 'There's no tennis-ball acting,' says Mescal. 'We had a 3D print of a rhino that could blink and looked insanely real. Again, that's one of Ridley's strengths. Nothing is really left to the imagination.'

Scott's had feedback from at least one convinced customer thus far. 'Somebody said, "Was [the rhino] hurt?" I said, "Really? Is that a serious question?"' That's a heck of a compliment for your VFX department, though. 'We gave him a few Advil,' deadpans Scott. 'He had a headache.'

Orchestrating much of Lucius' gladiatorial career is new character Macrinus, played by Denzel Washington, reuniting with Scott some 17 years after *American Gangster*.

PLAYING POLITICS

Macrinus is a former slave who has proven himself impressively socially mobile in Roman society. Scott describes him as 'a dominant, wealthy merchant turned businessman... He's an arms-dealer billionaire. His passion, instead of having horse races, which he has anyway, he would have teams of gladiators.'

Macrinus notices in Lucius a rage that he believes could take him far in the arena. A jovial, no-nonsense Washington tells *TF* straightforwardly about *Gladiator II*'s appeal to him. 'It's Ridley, and it was a tight and interesting script. And Macrinus is a bit of a nasty fellow, which I found interesting... I was all in.'

Despite the analogy of Macrinus as a billionaire businessman, Washington asserts that he didn't draw on any real-world influences, either contemporary or historical. 'I built it from the ground up,' he says. As for his way into the intense and somewhat flamboyant character, he says, 'I just put on the clothes and walked around. I say that lightly, but it is very important in this kind of film. We're just walking around with sandals all the time in – whatever they call it – gowns or dresses. And jewellery. That changes my perspective on things because I'm not a gown, sandals, jewellery kind of guy by nature,' he laughs.

Connie Nielsen returns from the original film to play Lucilla

THE EMPERORS' NEW GROOVE #2

Fred Hechinger is Caracalla

What was it like working with Ridley Scott?
What I learned is, he is someone who follows his gut. More than anything, he doesn't want to lose art in the terrors of time. He doesn't want movies to slip by because he was hesitant about an idea that he, in his heart, knew was true. He's one of the fastest decision-makers I've ever met and worked with. He's very, very straight-up.

Did this role involve much research?
I always find that, in the research period, the details that inspire and are connected to the story, you take – and the ones that aren't connected to that story can go by the wayside. Another thing about Ridley is, he has no qualms being anachronistic. He wants historical films to feel as ugly and messy and real as life does now.

What was it like playing brothers with Joseph Quinn?
It's almost like we thought of it as a double act. We were like this old vaudevillian duo. We wanted [the characters] to be connected, and then we also wanted to independently create opposite people. I think there is a real yin-yang to them. I consider them both deeply competitive and deeply codependent.

And most importantly, what was it like working with the (real) monkey?
I got there way in advance, and trained, and built a comfortable relationship with this creature. Dondas [the character] is a boy. Cherry played him, and she's a female monkey. I'm going to say 'she' but the character is a boy. You want to make sure that she's comfortable. And also the trainers brought her and her sibling over three or four months beforehand. They really love and understand this animal. It was just a pleasure. Also, when you're playing someone that's descending into madness, and then you have a monkey on your left shoulder, it's a great collaborator. You have the greatest partner besides you. It's wild. **MATT MAYTUM**

Ridley Scott has called Caracalla and his brother Geta spins on Roman icons Romulus and Remus

Given the anticipation attached to Washington's performance, he's an early contender ahead of the next awards season. 'When you watch the film, he's unbelievable,' says Mescal. 'I think by proxy of being in a scene with him, he makes you better, which is an amazing talent to have. I'm very, very grateful for it.'

Double Oscar-winner Washington isn't oblivious to younger actors on set looking up to him. 'I would be lying if I said I didn't know if or when that's the case,' he says. 'But I understand it. You know, I'm the old guy now. I was the 30-year-old, and now I'm the 70-year-old, and he's 30. I've been around, and I know a few things. If they ask, or if they want, I can share what I know.'

Macrinus plays politics as deftly as he manages gladiators, and he harbours ambitions towards the highest echelons of Roman society. At this point in the story, some 20 years on from *Gladiator*, the decadent, chaotic Rome is overseen by sibling emperors Geta (Joseph Quinn) and Caracalla (Fred Hechinger).

'The believability of the emperors – or the integrity of the emperors – was going to be about whether you believed them as brothers,' says Quinn. 'So it became far more of a collective effort from myself and Fred, rather than an individual exploration of these boys.'

'The punk energy of Johnny Rotten and Sid Vicious was something that was inspiring to all of us,' adds Hechinger. 'We wanted to have this feeling as an audience, and also as the people of Rome when they meet the emperors, that anything could happen to them. They are not safe, and there is a level of impulsiveness and a kind of wide-ranging dancing between poles.' Scott's approach to the filmmaking would only add to the living, breathing intensity of this recreation of Rome.

'The punk energy of Johnny Rotten and Sid Vicious was something that was inspiring to all of us'
FRED HECHINGER

WHEN IN ROME

The enviably prolific Scott releases enormo-scale blockbusters at a rate few, if any, other directors at his level can manage. 'We shot [*Gladiator II*] in 51 days,' he says, matter-of-factly. 'Normally, it would be 100… We were just quick. I used 11 cameras.' Putting so many lenses on the action speeds things along, and Scott picked up lessons in frugality early on in his career as an ad director. 'When you're doing commercials, you have to fight the clock,' he says. 'It's your wallet. Film school doesn't teach you that on every second hand, there's a dollar sign.'

'Ridley's rhythm is totally different than anything I've worked on,' says Mescal. Having that many cameras rolling at any given moment transforms the energy of the shoot. 'If there's cameras everywhere, you're on camera, no matter what you're doing,' says Washington. 'Don't pick your nose,

Paul Mescal (Lucius) with co-star Peter Mensah, who plays Jugurtha

you're on camera. Or, well, if you pick your nose, don't eat it! That might have been interesting for the character. I should have done that, actually.'

'You're basically placed into documentary mode all the time,' explains Hechinger. 'And you have to fully exist in that environment, and under those conditions.' It means, Hechinger continues, 'there's no kind of, "Wait for this person to say their line, and make sure you say it loud here, and quiet there." There's a mob of 700 people, and they are screaming at full volume. If you need them to stop talking, you have to figure out how to get them to stop talking.'

'It felt like a kind of rebirth of the kind of rock-and-roll, old-Hollywood blockbuster,' says Quinn. 'It was extraordinary to bear witness to it all.'

Gladiator II returned to locations that were used for *Gladiator*. 'We were in Malta where we built the arena the first time,' says Wick. 'We built it exactly the same place. That was a strange homecoming for everybody. We built more of Rome this time… We had been in a different part of Morocco before – a different set but close by.'

'They built Rome,' marvels Washington. 'I couldn't believe it. I mean, they built the whole city. God bless Paramount. They spent a lot of money.' He breaks into a chuckle. 'I shouldn't laugh! But they spent a lot of money. But it's on the screen. I mean, you see it. On the day, just walking around, you're with 1,000 extras, walking the streets of Rome, and I'm holding my skirt, with my sandals on. You were there.'

'I think the very first day, and just coming out and there being a couple of hundred to a thousand SAs [supporting artists/extras], with fires burning, and the walls of Morocco, I was like, "Ooh – this is fucking big,"' remembers Mescal. 'But… the first thing [Ridley] said before filming was, "Your nerves are no fucking good to me." Which is Ridley in a nutshell, but it's the perfect thing to say, because it's so liberating. He's totally right.'

'The first thing Ridley said was, "Your nerves are no good to me." It's the perfect thing to say – so liberating'

PAUL MESCAL

GREAT SCOTT

Scott's trademark pragmatism extends to every aspect of the production. For the opening invasion of Numidia, a set from his 2005 historical epic *Kingdom of Heaven* was repurposed. 'And from that, digitally, I can turn all that sand into sea,' he explains. 'We built three full-sized ships on massive industrial devices with 12 fat wheels, which work on a digital thing, where they go at different speeds, and turn, and do anything. So I can take a ship

Director Scott working with stars Pascal and Mescal

Pedro Pascal's Acacius finds favour from Emperor Geta (Joseph Quinn)

almost 100ft long. They come in, and approach the wall, and, later, we put in the water [using CGI].'

'We were shooting the whole opening battle where the Roman ships arrive,' adds producer Lucy Fisher. 'We had three boats that we built – just three. You [see] hundreds [in the film], but there were just three, and they were in the sand of Morocco. They weren't anywhere near water. They were literally in the desert in Morocco, being towed towards the wall.

'You're hoping it's going to look good,' Fisher laughs, 'and chances are, with the effects people that we had on this project and with Ridley's brain, it will. But you're literally towing those boats.'

With the picture created by his cast and crew, it's almost possible to imagine the 86-year-old director dragging the boats himself. 'I want my next 10 whatever years I've got left in this business – I want to be as excited and energetic as he is,' says Washington.

'Nothing is too hard,' says Fisher. 'He's always thinking about how to make something better. He's physically indefatigable. And he puts on a straw hat, he's out there in the heat, and he's doing it.'

His work rate is no doubt helped by the heads of department he works with consistently. An 86th-birthday bash was thrown for him mid-production, and Wick and Fisher noticed that all of the HODs present had been working with Scott for 25 years. 'We were teasing Ridley,' jokes Wick. 'You know, it's going to kind of hurt his credibility as an alpha, edgy, autocratic director to have such close relationships that last for 25 years.'

Scott certainly isn't showing any signs of slowing down. If *Gladiator II* hits big – and all the signs point that way, from the broad appeal of the cast to the reprisal of a property that's only grown more beloved since 2000 – we might not have to wait another 20+ years for another. Of the previously mentioned *Gladiator III*, Scott says he's already begun writing. 'I've already got eight pages,' he tells *TF*. 'I've got the beginning of a very good footprint.'

As Maximus famously asked, 'Are you not entertained?' Sounds like we're going to be…

The sequel sees a reprise of the original's stunning mix of CG and done-for-real production design

GLADIATOR II OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 15 NOVEMBER.

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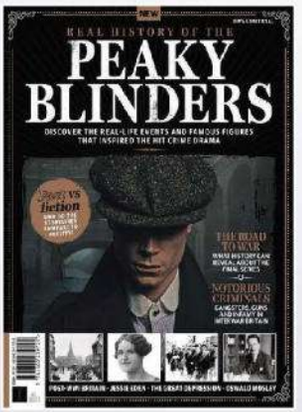

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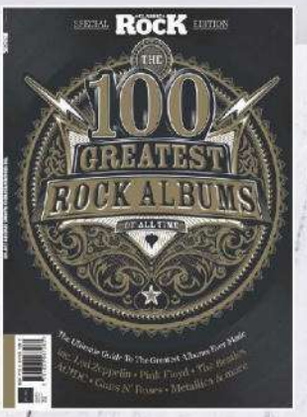

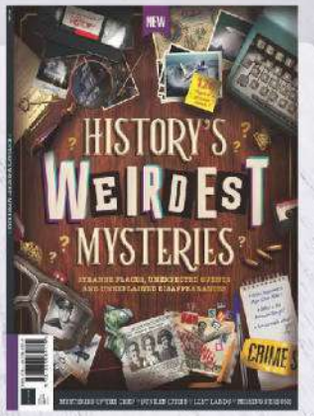

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BORN TO BE WILD

BROTHERS IS THE MOST SURPRISING ACTION COMEDY OF THE YEAR, AND NOT JUST BECAUSE JOSH BROLIN AND PETER DINKLAGE PLAY CRIMINAL TWINS. ***TOTAL FILM*** ROUNDS UP THE STARS TO TALK ABOUT DYSFUNCTIONAL FAMILIES, THE 'HARD AS NAILS' COMEDIES THEY GREW UP WITH, AND MASTURBATING MONKEYS...

WORDS **JAMIE GRAHAM**

Josh Brolin and Peter Dinklage play twins raised as career criminals

In *Brothers*, the new film by director Max Barbakow (*Palm Springs*), Josh Brolin and Peter Dinklage play twins raised by Glenn Close's career-criminal mom. Growing up, the brothers' heists become increasingly risky (and profitable) until Dinklage's Jady is caught and lands a five-year stretch. Brolin's Moke escapes and goes straight.

We learn all this in a whistle-stop prologue. The main action kicks off as Jady is released from clink to find Moke living a suburban life, his first child about to be born. Only Jady has one last job he has to do if he's to get out from under the thumb of Brendan Fraser's corrupt prison guard, Farful. And it's a two-man job…

Having Brolin and Dinklage play twins might make *Brothers* sound like goofy Schwarzenegger/DeVito vehicle *Twins*, but it actually has more in common with other comedies of that era, such as *Midnight Run* and *48 Hrs.* Shooting a lot of nights on the road, and with much of the action taking place in motels, diners and bars, it mixes its absurdity with fist fights and shootouts, while underneath all of the laughter and the action are some unvarnished observations on family life. The script, after all, came out of Brolin's recollections of his own youth, for the son of actor James Brolin and casting director and wildlife activist Jane Cameron Agee hung with the 'Cito Rats' in Santa Barbara after his parents divorced, and has been open about his wild youth on the record before.

Can *Brothers* bring back the sort of adult comedies that used to switch up tones and genres and have something to say? Over to Brolin and Dinklage for some fighting talk…

How did *Brothers* first spring to life?

Peter Dinklage: I got a call from Josh. He said, 'Hey, man, I don't know you, you don't know me, but a friend of mine says we have the biggest heads in showbusiness.' Not egos. Though both of our egos are enormous. Literally, we have two big heads. And Josh said, 'We should play twin brothers because of said fact.' I took it as a compliment. Montgomery Clift had a big head.

Josh Brolin: I've actually looked at it objectively and it seems right. I called him and said, 'I have this idea, loosely based on my family…' And we started to riff on it.

PD: We shopped the idea around. And Legendary [Pictures] loved the idea.

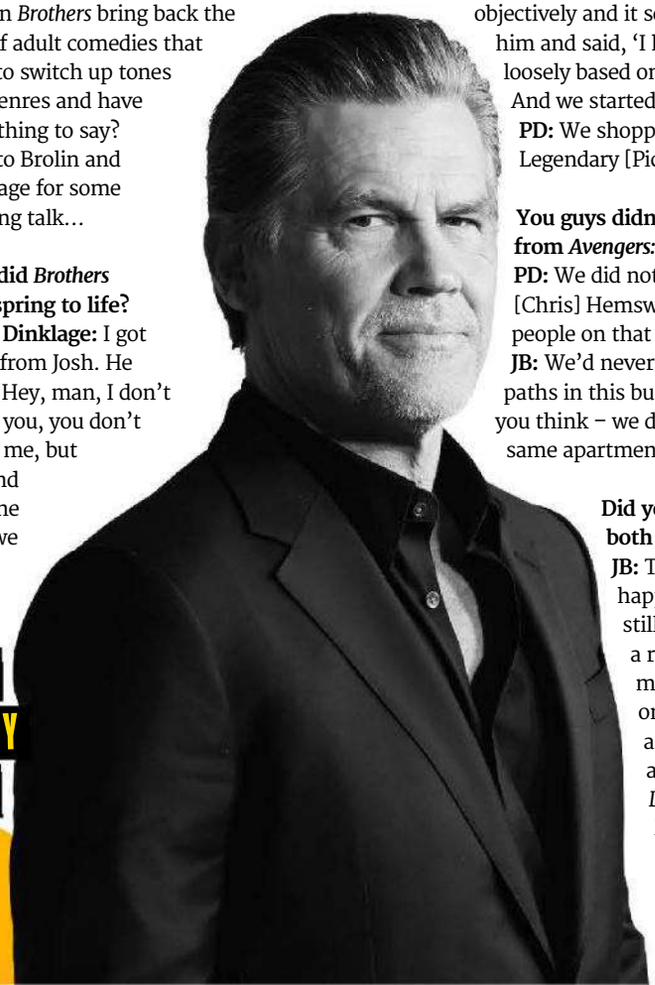
You guys didn't know each other from *Avengers: Infinity War*?

PD: We did not meet at all. I only met [Chris] Hemsworth. There were 500 people on that show.

JB: We'd never met. People cross paths in this business way less than you think – we don't all live in the same apartment complex.

Did you hit it off? You're both no-bullshit guys…

JB: There was a kinship that happened immediately. We still stay in touch. We had a really good time on the movie. A lot of time, on comedies… I did a comedy a long time ago called *Flirting with Disaster*, with Mary Tyler Moore and Ben Stiller and Téa Leoni, and it



'I CALLED HIM AND SAID, "I HAVE THIS IDEA, LOOSELY BASED ON MY FAMILY…"'

JOSH BROLIN

was one of the most serious sets I've ever been on. Then dramas are the ones you end up having fun on – *No Country for Old Men* was one of the most fun pictures I ever did. But this was different. We had so much fun on this show. There was no ego.

PD: Yeah. One thing me and my friends have in common is sense of humour. That's probably the most important thing in life; how you wield it. Josh and I definitely have that same sense of humour. We both love what we do for a living but we realise how absurd it can be, to make your living playing dress-up. So with something like this, where it's two brothers, we just went all-in, where we have this cantankerous relationship, but a very loving relationship. We assumed the roles of these guys 24/7.

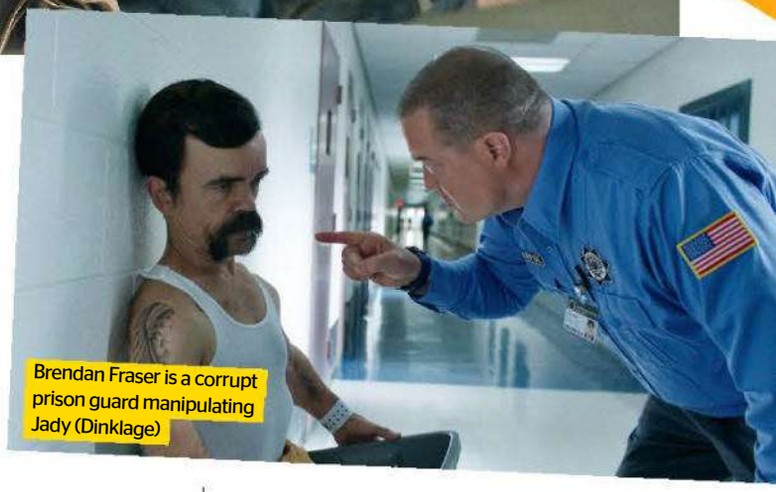
Brothers* feels like an old-school comedy, like *Midnight Run* or *48 Hrs.

JB: Absolutely. I've watched *Midnight Run* probably 20 times since it's come out. I love that movie. It's about chemistry. There's a lot of really wonderful reasons why we've gotten away from the way things used to be, personally, but… There's almost like a hazing in both of those movies [you mention], where you have two nemeses and then they find their friendship through the strife that they're going through.

PD: *Midnight Run*, *48 Hrs.*… tough as nails. You could be laughing one moment then somebody gets shot in the shoulder. In *Midnight Run*, the back and forth with Charles Grodin and Robert De Niro is so fun, and then there's that scene with De Niro and his daughter – it's so heartbreaking. You don't really see that any more. What we're trying to do with this film is really, y'know, take a left turn once in a while. Who's to say a comedy has to all be funny?

JB: When I was a kid in high school, some of my best friends came out of some moment where you get in a fist fight and end up becoming friends for the next 10 years. There's something that I miss about that. I know that I've surrounded myself with it, whether it's a crew of bikers or whatever, where there's people that you can actually rely on but there's a hazing and a prodding that goes on that keeps it sharp. You don't see that a lot in movies now. It's all escapism. This movie tries to celebrate that [old way], a little bit. I know it sounds bad but it's not all bad. There's actually a trust and a loyalty and a kinship that can come out of that.

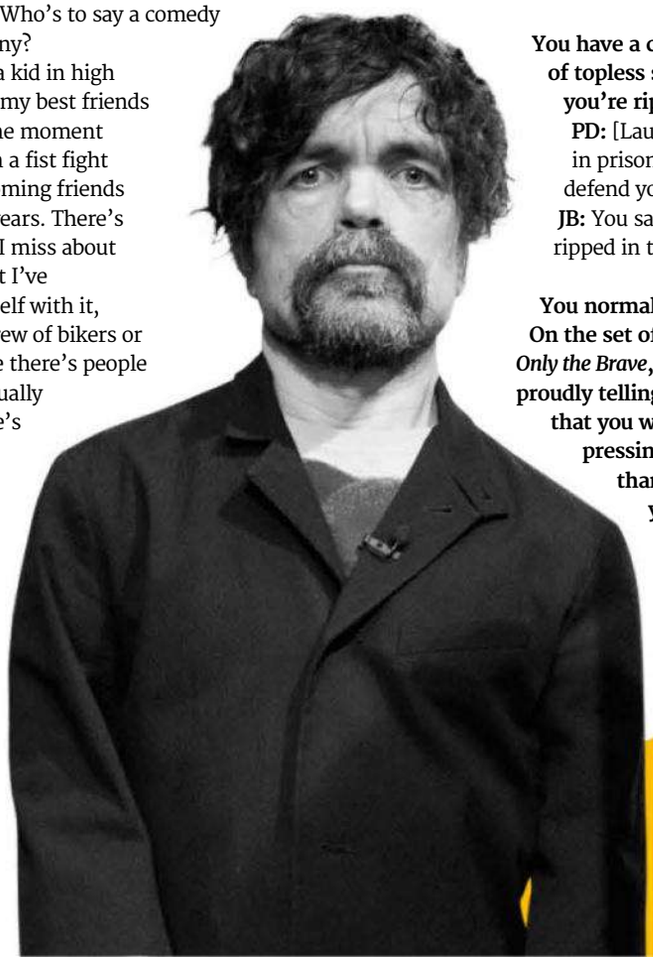
Glenn Close plays the twins' felonious mother



Brendan Fraser is a corrupt prison guard manipulating Jady (Dinklage)

Did you enjoy reversing expectations? Peter, your character is the leader and the rule-breaker, whereas Josh plays a suburban dad who gets dragged along.

PD: I do love that. We wanted to play against type. Josh is always cast as the really hardcore man. He gained a bunch of weight for this. He did the softened-up family-man version of himself. And y'know, I got to get all jacked-up, being the ex-con. I covered myself in fake tats and worked out a lot.



You have a couple of topless scenes and you're ripped!

PD: [Laughs] Y'know, in prison you gotta defend yourself!

JB: You saying I wasn't ripped in this film?

You normally are ripped. On the set of 2017 drama *Only the Brave*, you were proudly telling *Total Film* that you were bench-pressing more than guys half your age.

JB: I definitely didn't say that.

Words to that effect.

JB: During *Only the Brave*, I cared about that movie so much; it meant the world to me to feel that I was capable. In *Brothers*, the part calls for feeling incapable. It's a really uncomfortable feeling for me to feel like I've let everything go and I don't care and there's a sense of ennui. So no, I don't like it. I've got to get my shit together and start working out. And it's hell, man. I'm 56 years old. It's not as easy as it used to be. People say it's fun to gain weight – you can eat whatever you want – but it's horrible because the minute you have a goal [to pile on the pounds], you're not hungry. You know you're going to slip into this feeling of, like, 'Eugh, you scumbag, you don't care any more, look at that, you've made some money and now you're just a sloth in comfort.'

Beneath the laughs, this film touches on truths about families: anger, resentment, abandonment, love, sacrifice…

PD: Yeah, it really does. The idea, even if it's not true, that you think a mother loves one child more than the other. That jealousy. What roles we play in the family dynamic; that's ingrained at such an early age, whether it

'WE REALISE HOW ABSURD IT CAN BE, TO MAKE YOUR LIVING PLAYING DRESS-UP'

PETER DINKLAGE

Peter Dinklage starred in the 2021 musical film *Cyrano*

be peacekeeper or instigator. Everybody's assigned these roles based on your personality. I think Macon [Blair, *Brothers*' writer] and Max [Barbakow, director] hit on that in a really truthful way.

JB: It was important to me. In any story, if you don't care, you don't care. You can have a spectacle that's fun, and me and Peter running around and volleying with each other, but all that is meaningless if you don't give a shit. So there's a reality in all of it. Hopefully it's identifiable for some. Definitely for me. It's a version of my life that I'm not necessarily incredibly proud of [chuckles], but it's a version. The scene with the monkey… A version of that actually happened to me. And then the relationships that my brother had with the animals that my mother took away from people who had taken them out of the wild and illegally raised them.

Hang on a moment. So the scene where your character is forced to masturbate a chimpanzee… What version of that actually happened to you?!

JB: The *real* version? I have many, many monkey stories. But I'm not gonna tell you.

OK, moving swiftly on… There's a great karaoke scene. Did you have a fun night doing it, with a few beers?

PD: It was pretty controlled. The problem with having a few beers when you're working a 14-hour day is that few beers turns into 'I want to take a nap and wrap for the day.' Working in a bar like that, where it's 10am and everybody's acting like it's two o'clock in the morning, partying, shit-faced… It's always very surreal.

You had to disguise the beauty of your voice, which we were treated to in *Cyrano*…

PD: Thank you. I'm not sure that's true. I guess I can carry a tune. My go-to karaoke song is Psychedelic Furs' *Love My Way* [belts out a chorus, impressively].

JB: Javier Bardem is the greatest karaoke singer I've ever met in my life. He gets up there and it's almost like a different persona he takes on. But me, I was terrified. So that was all Max. He set it up in a way that was really fun. He played different types of music regardless of what we were singing. Glenn [Close], man. Having grown up on her movies, there was nothing that suggested that she was fun. Now she's one of my favourite human beings on the planet. I've just done the other movie with her [*Wake Up Dead Man*], with Rian [Johnson]. She's interesting, she's smart, she's electric, she's funnier than shit, she's mischievous.

More mischievous than you?

JB: I have a habit of mooning people. On the set I would do it, and then one day we were at an abandoned mall, and Peter and I were down on the ground floor, and Glenn was on the upper floor. I hear, 'HEY!' And Peter and I look up and Glenn moons us. It's something I couldn't even imagine happening. If that's the influence I have in this life, so be it.

You've both done massive movies, or shows, and smaller things rooted in character or genre. Do you have a preference?

PD: You mean movies I get paid for or not paid for? [laughs] The older I get, it's who I'm working with. It's less to do with big budget or not. Or genre. I'm in my 50s now and you spend three weeks to five months doing a movie, with strangers. You've got to hopefully have a good time with them.

On a series like *Game of Thrones*, it must have been like family.

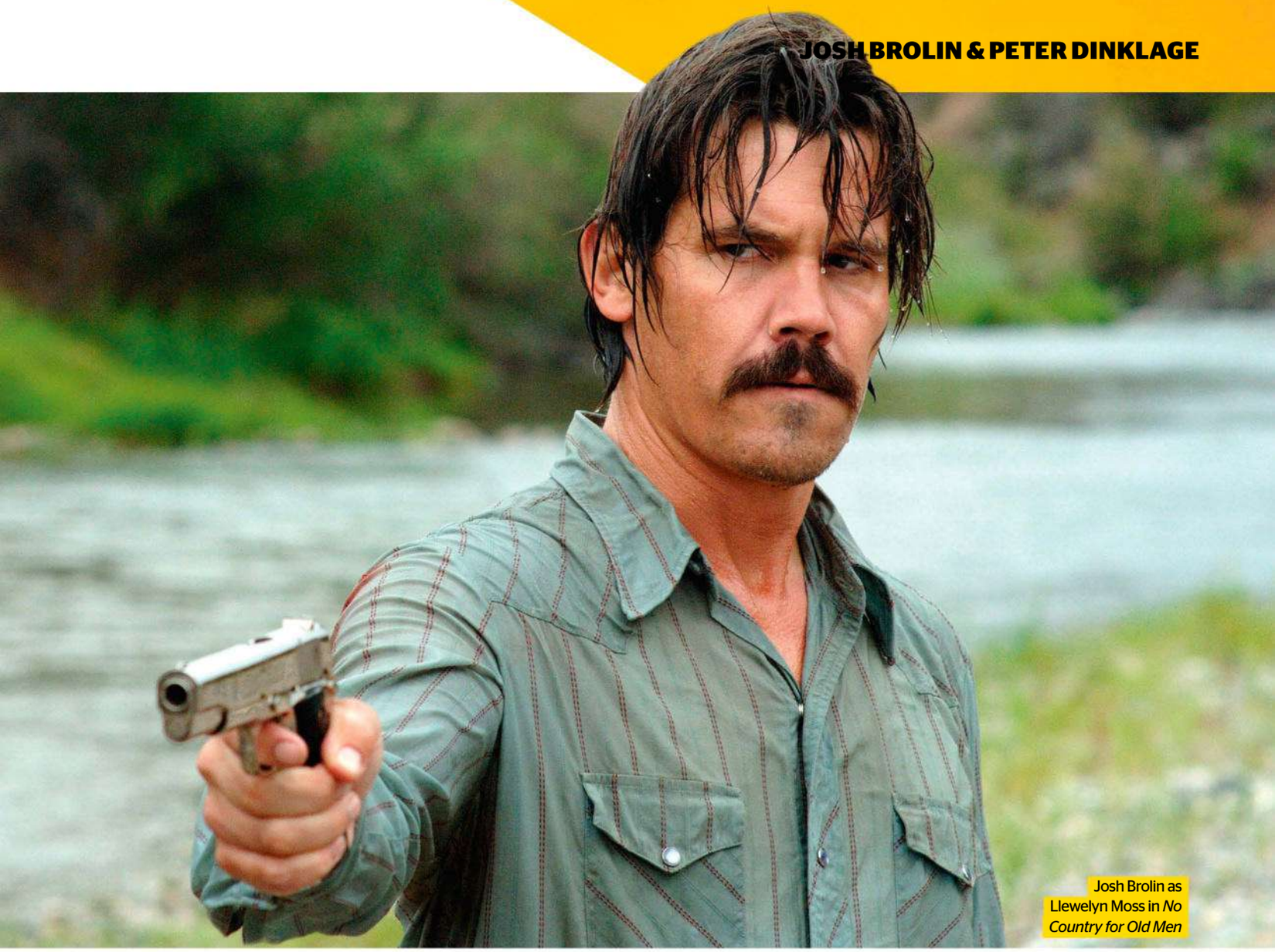
PD: Doing a TV show is very different to doing two months in Atlanta on *Brothers*. It's more about your life than the work. They're so intertwined. The first seven seasons, we shot six months of the year. I was the only American in the cast. Well, Jason Momoa was in the first season. But the rest, they would go home to London on their days off. A quick trip from Belfast to London. But I lived in New York and I didn't go home. Then my daughter was born at the end of the second season, so we all stayed together as a family, and she went to school there. She developed an Irish accent. The final season we shot for a whole year, and two weeks before that, my son was born, so he spent the first year of his life in Ireland. And thank God there weren't any assholes on that show. Anywhere. From top to bottom. All we had in these remote locations was each other.

JB: I enjoy the movies that land. That doesn't necessarily mean do really well. So if you look at *No Country* or if you look at the character in *Milk* [Dan White, who shot gay activist Harvey Milk]… People are like, 'I was watching *Milk* and there's something about that guy that I felt sympathetic towards.' That's interesting to me. This is an awful human being who's so self-absorbed that he felt he had to do something as tactile as grab a gun, load it, shoot somebody. It's so pathetic. But what if we look from his perspective? Just

'I LIKE SURROUNDING MYSELF WITH GREAT ARTISTS AND I'M FORTUNATE TO KNOW A LOT OF THEM'

PETER DINKLAGE

ALAMY, AMAZON, GETTY



Josh Brolin as Llewelyn Moss in *No Country for Old Men*

touch on it, not steep ourselves in it. So to answer your question, if it doesn't feel new or dangerous or that we're taking a big swing, it starts to become really uninteresting to me.

What's the plan, going forward?

PD: I'm picky as all heck, much to the chagrin of people who are like, 'Hey, let's get paid.' I just like surrounding myself with really great artists and I'm fortunate now to know a lot of them, and we'll always reach out to each other. I guess it's privileged to say, 'I don't want money to be the overriding decision on whether I choose a movie or TV show, or not.' Because as soon as you do that, it can be not satisfying. Not that making a nice income isn't great, but I like to make my choices in a different way. Getting older, again, you release the pressure on yourself. When you're young, you have to prove something. When you're older, and know who you are, you just go with the wind.

JB: My intention is not, 'What can I do to be the most successful?' It's, 'What can I do that I can very personally, quietly, lie on my death bed and look back and chuckle at?' I want to have a house and eat and send my kids to school, but beyond that it's icing and it doesn't have to be there if it's in place of a career that I'm proud of.

You have *Weapons* and *Wake Up Dead Man* in the bag…

JB: I saw *Barbarian* and thought, 'That's a different point of view.' Then I did research [on *Barbarian* and *Weapons* writer/director Zach Cregger] – his YouTube videos, his sketch show. We got together. I'd never done a horror film, really. The design of the script was so interesting.

And *Wake Up Dead Man*?

JB: Rian is probably my new favourite director. It was one of the greatest experiences I've ever had. Incredible cast. I'm playing a priest. My wife reminded me… She said, 'Do you remember a year ago you said that you wanted to play a priest? It's like you manifest this shit.' Right now, I want to go back to feeling the choices are a little more dangerous and potentially fulfilling than the last five years. I love Denis [Villeneuve, who Brolin worked with on *Sicario*, *Dune: Part One* and *Dune: Part Two*], he's one of my closest friends, and I love these directors that I've been working with, but there's also a comfort to some of these bigger films. I'm lucky to have sat in their chairs but I'm ready to get up and start running again.

BROTHERS RELEASES ON PRIME VIDEO ON 17 OCTOBER.

'IF IT DOESN'T FEEL NEW OR DANGEROUS, IT STARTS TO BECOME REALLY UNINTERESTING TO ME'

JOSH BROLIN

McQueen & Country

A moment of national pride and terror comes to the screen with World War Two historical drama *Blitz*. *Total Film* speaks to writer/director Steve McQueen and his stars Saoirse Ronan and Stephen Graham about uncovering the truth and celebrating the triumph of a defining moment in modern British history.

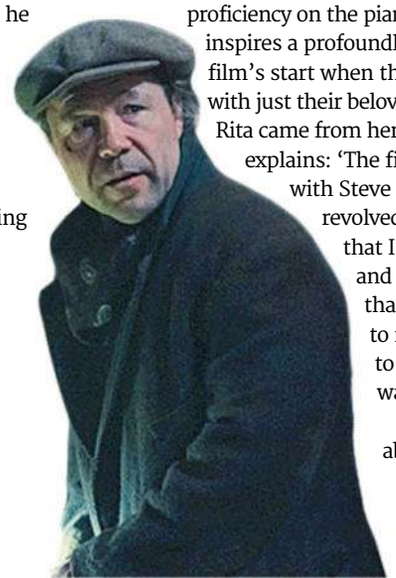
WORDS **LEILA LATIF**

Stephen Graham, one of the stars of Steve McQueen's *Blitz*, is speaking to *Total Film* when he suddenly pauses mid-sentence. He seems in a slight state of disbelief as he describes working with the film's acclaimed writer/director. 'I don't use this word often… but he's a genius. I feel I'm in the presence of genius.'

TF knows precisely what Graham means. During our conversation to discuss all things *Blitz*, the *12 Years a Slave* director joyously speaks a mile a minute, recalling details of each shot's composition, cross-referencing moments from his astonishing oeuvre, and talking passionately about his inspirations. In the last two years alone, the quietly prolific McQueen has put out a four-and-a-half-hour documentary about Amsterdam's history of Nazi occupation in *Occupied City*, artworks about his father's deathbed and the Grenfell Tower tragedy, and now *Blitz*, hotly tipped for award-season glory. But when awards are mentioned, he's quick to wave it off. 'That's the accolades, that's the bullshit. That's a by-product. It's about the work, the work, THE WORK in all capitals.'

McQueen's latest film is new territory for the director. Not only is it backed by the streaming service Apple TV+ (though he insists, 'I made *Blitz* for the cinema'), he also has a host of new collaborators on the project, including Saoirse Ronan, Harris Dickinson, Paul Weller and many below-the-line creatives. Ronan plays Rita, a worker in a munitions factory who sends her mixed-raced son George (Elliott Heffernan, in a charming and sensitive debut) to be evacuated to the countryside while German planes are besieging London in September of 1940. George escapes the train and makes his way back, but along the way, he is terrorised by falling bombs, trapped in collapsing shelters and encounters a criminal gang led by Albert (Graham).

Back in 2019, Graham guested on BBC radio staple *Desert Island Discs* and was shocked to hear that a certain genius director he'd long admired had been listening in. 'He said it really moved him,' Graham grins. 'So he asked if we could meet up and have a little bit of lunch.' McQueen explained the role that he thought Graham was perfect for and the actor was delighted, even though, as *TF* points out, it could be unflattering to hear you're 'perfect for' a mentally ill criminal who terrifies children. Graham laughs. 'Not at all! I was just a bit shocked.' This despite the celebrated actor having worked with Martin Scorsese, Shane Meadows and Gary Oldman, to name but a few. 'I don't ever really think people have seen my stuff.'



Director Steve McQueen with Elliott Heffernan (who plays George) on set; (inset, below) Stephen Graham as Albert

'The trauma of that time has an effect on where we are now as well'

STEVE McQUEEN

As well as seeing Graham's stuff, it transpired that McQueen had also seen a photograph of the evacuation, which was the seed from which his latest film grew. The director recalls it was 'an image of a Black child with an oversized coat and a suitcase on a platform. My immediate thought was, "Where'd you come from?" I already had the idea of doing something about the Blitz and the Second World War, but when I saw that photograph, that's what triggered this [film].'

MOTHER ENGLAND

But beyond those real-life images, the inspirations came from closer to home as the film evolved. McQueen's father-in-law, who loved cats, was the basis for Rita's father, Gerald (played by musician Paul Weller, whose proficiency on the piano is put to good use). He inspires a profoundly human moment at the film's start when the family flee their home with just their beloved pet in tow. For Ronan, Rita came from her own mother, as the actor explains: 'The first conversations I had with Steve McQueen about the role revolved around the relationship that I have with my mother and how it's a relationship that is incredibly precious to me. To be given a chance to honour that on screen was just such a gift.'

For Graham, a film about the Blitz that didn't ignore Britain's multicultural society was an opportunity to honour his own family, as despite often playing white roles, he points out, 'I'm mixed-race myself. My grandad was from Jamaica and I'm quite clued up, but I had never seen any image like that in my history classes. It was never part of the narrative of all of the films I've seen before.' It's significant to the actor to see those like him included in this key moment in British history, a moment that still inspires patriotic fervour but where 'I have never been offered that truth.'

As McQueen says, any accusations of the diverse cast being a box-ticking exercise – and the assumption that Black-British history commenced with Windrush – is a cruel erasure. When *Total Film* spoke to McQueen, it was in the wake of the UK's 'race riots' in August ('They weren't protests, make sure you put it in the article that they were race riots'), which deeply disturbed the director. Now presenting an account of 1940s London, he believes it's key to show under-discussed details on screen, like the fact 'there were three Black clubs off Seven Dials here in London during the 40s, 30s and 20s. It's well documented that there was Black community, Chinese community. London had a really dense, diverse population of people.'

Still, as much as *Blitz* seeks to honour that population, it is a tale of a city under siege and the compounded trauma of people – including Albert, who is living through the second conflict of his lifetime. 'What we try to bring with that character is we show the trauma,' Graham says. 'We show the impact of that because he's a survivor of the First World War. So to show the impact that had on all these people that were just trying to survive.' Ronan's character, Rita, might not have fought in the trenches, but she too has endured great tragedy that the film slowly unspools. Ronan explains, 'Major losses in [Rita's] life have made her an incredibly resilient woman while also still recognising that love and warmth and safety are precious.'

APPLE TV+

Saoirse Ronan plays Rita, George's mother, while Paul Weller stars as her father, Gerald

CAPITAL PAINS

London's present-day occupants don't have to fear shells falling from the sky, but McQueen believes the events he depicts are still echoing into our lives. 'The trauma of that time has an effect on where we are now as well. So many things… that keep-calm-and-carry-on idea because people aren't talking about certain things. There's a generational trauma that has gone through the country, from people's grandparents to their parents, to their parents to their children.' He pauses, acknowledging that those immersed in conflicts in Congo, Ukraine, Gaza and Sudan still face a very present threat. 'The horrors and the atrocities, people don't talk about it; they don't have a language for it or know how to articulate it. So it gets handed down or translated into violence.'

Rita and George make haste before the bombs fall

In the case of Ronan, there was something more positive to pass down. 'The fact that I was a child actor influenced the way I was with Elliott [aged nine at the time of filming], to make sure that he felt good and safe and he could trust me. The people in my life early on who were there for me on set and who took care of me, I'll never forget those relationships.'

While Ronan's time in those early projects is treasured, she has herself become central to one of McQueen's core memories. In an early scene in the film, the BBC come to the munitions factory where Rita is working and she beautifully sings a song for a morale-boosting broadcast around the nation, until the other women workers seize the moment to call for the government to open up the city's underground stations and provide shelter for its citizens. For a man with plenty of moments to be proud of, 'the proudest day on set I ever had was that day with those 450 women and – I've never had that – the chemistry, the energy. You could taste it.'

Part of that involved him showing just what a seismic change was happening for the female population who kept the country running during the war, the director explaining: 'People think the revolution for women didn't happen until in the 60s with the pill, which was another thing, but it happened there. In places like this factory when they're earning their money and getting this camaraderie. It was not going back after the war had ended. The sexual revolution as well; these things were happening back then because they had other things to think about than policing others' sexuality.' When asked how the men of the Blitz era and beyond reacted to the womanhood the film depicts, he responds with signature ardour: 'In that scene, it's not about the men; who gives a shit about them and what they thought? I wanted to give those women a platform but it's not a history lesson. I wanted to make a thrilling movie at the same time. A roller-coaster ride and I trust the process to deliver me the work.'

It'll come as no surprise that McQueen's process delivers an astonishing account of an era misremembered for uncomplicated patriotism, which McQueen's film pushes back against. The 'G' word certainly doesn't feel like a stretch for the director and his films. As Graham puts it, 'He's such an artist and a wonderful man unlike anyone I've ever met before.' But true to McQueen, he's not interested in whether or not this will lead to personal praise but looks outward at a world that still has its share of horrors. 'I'm interested in this movie showing us as audience members how to get our hands on the steering wheel. As soon as George jumps off that train, he's changed his narrative. And I think that we are in a position to do that, too. We can break the cycle. A different reality is in our grasp. I know it can happen.'

BLITZ OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 1 NOVEMBER AND STREAMS ON APPLE TV+ FROM 22 NOVEMBER.

Taking Wing

Unscripted, unexpected and impossible to pigeonhole... The cast and crew of Andrea Arnold's *Bird* talk *Total Film* through the making of a modern fable.

WORDS **PAUL BRADSHAW**

Bailey (Nykiya Adams) feels the need to escape her troubling home life

Midway through talking about *Bird*, Andrea Arnold gets distracted by a bird. 'Oh God, it's just the most beautiful thing… I don't even know what it is,' she says, spinning her laptop around to point us out the window of her hotel room. We can't tell either, but we can see the wooded mountains of Telluride, Colorado, where Arnold is staying for the festival that will serve as the film's North American premiere.

'Apparently bears go down the alleyways at night looking through the trash cans,' says Arnold, still staring off-screen. 'I'm wondering whether I've got the guts to go out with my mobile phone.' If anyone does, it's Andrea Arnold. Making her mark with urgent, brave, coming-of-age films like *Fish Tank* and *American Honey*, Arnold is drawn to everyday magic: capturing moments of realism with a loose, natural style that would terrify most filmmakers.

Returning to features after 2021's dairy-doc, *Cow*, Arnold's latest is her most personal and ambitious: a film about a 12-year-old girl, Bailey (Nykiya Adams), who lives on a Kent estate with her young dad (Barry Keoghan) and meets a man who might not be a man at all. There are heart-wrenching scenes of domestic violence. Rough-edged social realism. Flecks of fantasy. It's sort of a musical. A horror. A comedy. A love story.

'I've heard some people say, "Oh, it's a bit different to what Andrea normally does…"' laughs Arnold. 'But I allowed myself to do whatever came to me. I've got rules, but they're *my* rules so I can break them if I want to. It's definitely not what I normally do, but I also didn't allow myself to be limited by my imagination.'

It's in the imagination where *Bird* began, springing from a single image that Arnold found stuck in her head. 'There's a man, standing on the roof of a tower block, naked, in a mist,' she remembers. 'Everything was tall. Tall tower block. Tall man. Long penis. Who's the man? Why is he standing there? Is he an alien? Why is he naked? I mean, my head is mad!'

Fast-forward to June 2023 and Arnold is in the middle of Gravesend, Kent, trying to figure it out. Keoghan is riding a scooter through the high street, screaming along to Irish band Fontaines D.C. as Adams grips his waist with one hand and holds a live toad in the other (we'll get to that…).

FLYING INTO THE UNKNOWN

As much as Arnold has a vision for *Bird*, none of the actors has any idea where the film is headed. Shooting chronologically with a cast that includes many non-professionals and a script that only she ever sees, Arnold's way of working is designed to tease out something real and unpredictable.

'It's about allowing for the day,' she explains. 'I've never been the kind of director who wants to go out and get exactly what's on the page. When I made *Wuthering Heights*, the one driving image I had was this beast climbing the moor in the dark. When you come close, you see it's a man. It's Heathcliff, and he has all these rabbits covering his back so he looks like an animal. When we got to that scene, we had half an hour left and bright blue skies. And we only had three rabbits… If I was making a $100m film I could get it all exactly as I imagined it, but there's something beautiful about allowing for those changes. I kind of love the unexpected; the not knowing.'

While Arnold's style would scare off most actors, it was perfect for a non-professional cast who didn't have to unlearn all the rules. Needing a lead who was willing to surrender to the process but still bring enough of herself to the role, Arnold found the perfect balance in newcomer Nykiya Adams.

'Nykiya was different to what I'd written,' she admits. 'But, again, you have something in your mind and then you go and actually see the kids… And when Nykiya walked in the room, she made me feel awake. Sometimes teenagers don't express a lot… It's subtle, and you have to find it in the face. I just trusted that feeling.'

Less of a leap was Keoghan, still on a scorching-hot streak that's balanced blockbusters (*Eternals*, *The Batman*) with talking-point dramas (*The Banshees of Inisherin*, *Saltburn*).

'I remember meeting Andrea in a fish and chip shop in East London,' he says, chatting from another festival premiere – this time in Toronto. 'She was like, "There's no script and you're not going to know what it's about…" And I was in love with that idea. Not having a chance to pre-empt anything: just going off instinct. I sign up for a film because I want to be ahead of myself when I finish it, and this was a moment for me.'

Covered in tattoos, a dad of two, Keoghan's Bug is a force of nature – spending half the film chasing Bailey on a scooter, and half singing songs to a toad so it'll be in the mood to slime out enough hallucinogens to help him pay the rent.

'Bug is based on a collage of people I know, and he's a bit like myself, too,' says Keoghan. 'I've got a two-year-old, and I know young parents who have teenagers and it's almost like a sibling relationship. My father figure is my granny, and my relationship with my son isn't that traditional either, so I sort of brought that to it. He's so innocent. Selfishness isn't always a mean thing. It can come out of fear and frustration and all these other impulses. And I think Bug makes choices out of just being young and from having this very pure love for his daughter.'

The last part of the triangle is the strangest; with Franz Rogowski joining the cast as Bird – a mythic figure who flies through Bailey's world as a vaguely threatening guardian angel. And for Rogowski, Arnold's pitch was even odder than it was for everyone else.

'All I had was an album of songs curated by Andrea and some pictures showing a naked man floating above a lake…' he says, talking

Barry Keoghan as scooter-loving father Bug

MUBI: ATSUSHI NISHIJIMA

‘It’s definitely not what I normally do, but I also didn’t allow myself to be limited by my imagination’

ANDREA ARNOLD

The eponymous Bird (Franz Rogowski) asks for help from young Bailey

from the inside of a camper van somewhere in his native Germany, an actor as enigmatic as the characters he’s played in *Passages*, *Great Freedom*, *Happy End* and more. ‘The first time we met she shared a lot of dreams from her childhood. After two hours of conversation, I realised, “OK, I have no clue what she is trying to achieve here, but I want to work with her.”’

Except that wasn’t all Arnold wanted to leave Rogowski with – mailing a package of notes, backstory and follow-up invites that never arrived. By the time he turned up on set, Rogowski was still in the dark.

‘She gave me her number, but I knew it didn’t really make sense to call if what she was offering me was an adventure of the unknown, you know?’ shrugs Rogowski. ‘So I guessed my preparation was just to cultivate this openness and go to the United Kingdom. I was in this van on a little campsite in the middle of Kent, surrounded by some very interesting people next to the highway.

‘I was accompanying Nykiya as Bird, but to a certain extent I was also accompanying Andrea. Sometimes we would turn on the camera and sometimes we wouldn’t. Every day, we would start with a couple of hours of just arriving and being part of the scenery, saying hello to the neighbours. I mean, she’s not that naive – she knows what she wants – but we were always looking for the beauty of the moment.’

Not wanting to pin down the edges of his character, Rogowski enjoys the blurred lines of whatever *Bird* represents – not man or woman or human at all. Moving and acting more like an animal as the film dips deeper into magic realism, Rogowski’s alien performance is something he found in restraint.

‘I tried not to be a bird,’ he says. ‘We found ways to keep it subtle. You start with your skeleton. You can move your pelvis in a sexual way or you can move it in a way that’s really just exploring the tailbone.’

As Rogowski explores his tailbone, Adams bottles up her angst, Keoghan sings to a toad and Arnold looks for real life on the streets, *Bird* feels hard to pigeonhole. By the time the big Blur, Verve and Coldplay singalongs come in, it feels like something more than unique.

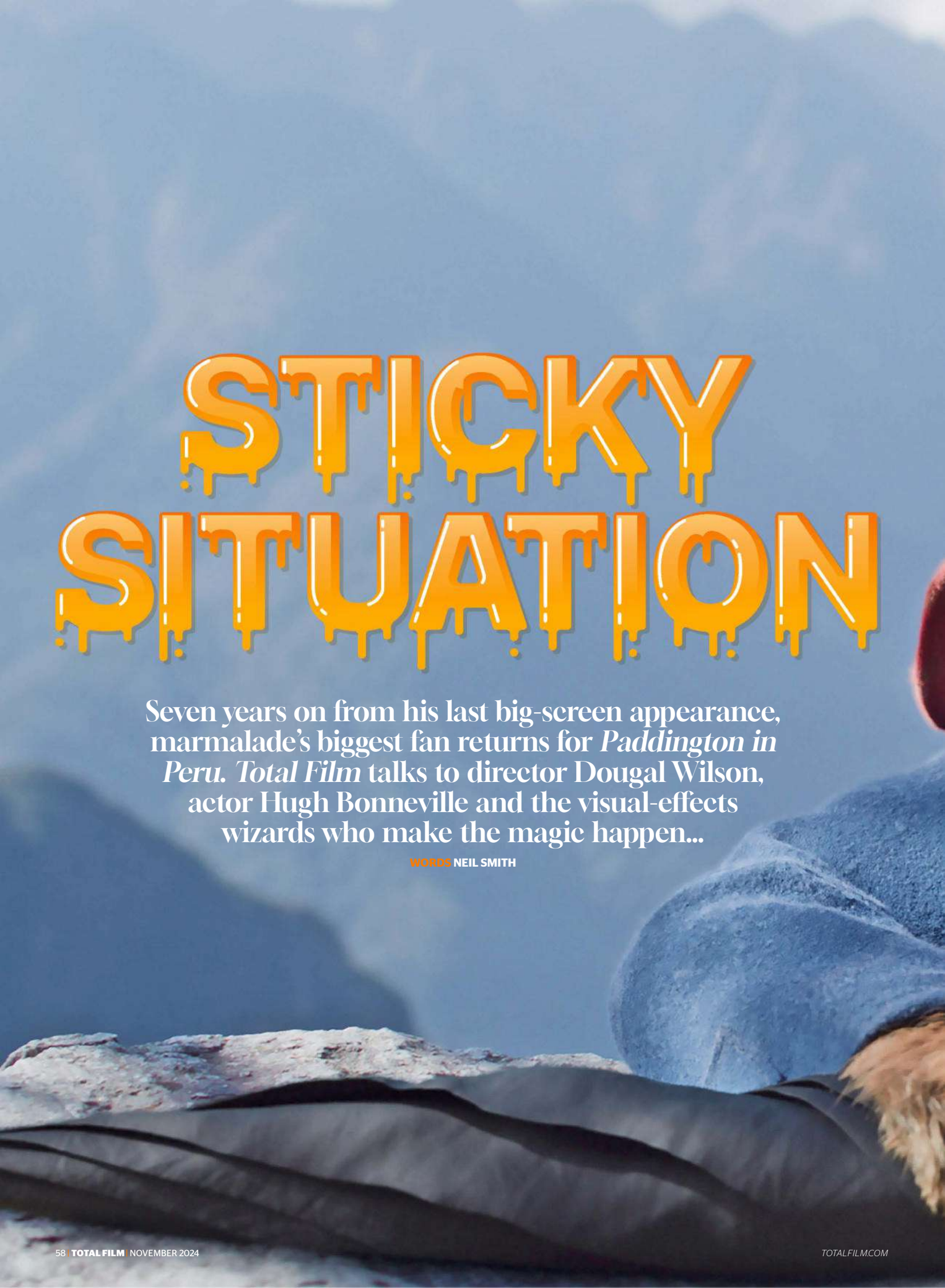
SOARING HIGH

‘I think life is ambiguous, isn’t it?’ laughs Arnold, now looking back on her first fantasy film that maybe isn’t a fantasy at all. ‘Life’s complicated, and all kinds of things can be true at once. I always want to find the complexity. The more AI and perfect everything becomes, the more I want to mess it up. I even left the edges of the frame a bit messy.’

‘I’ve experienced different hierarchies on sets before,’ adds Rogowski. ‘[Michael] Haneke is not really interested in your process – he comes on set with the entire film already in his head. [Terrence] Malick is obsessed with light, so with him, you could spend weeks walking through a sunset. But Andrea is full of colour and painting and music; and she depends on the moment. She’s like a hunter tiger: when she feels the heartbeat, she starts shooting.’

‘I love that!’ laughs Arnold, briefly distracted again by the bird outside. ‘I guess some directors prefer to be like farmers – they put everything behind gates and they manage it. But if you’re going off into the wilderness and you’re *seeking*, that’s a very different approach. Sometimes things don’t go the way you want, but what I care about is the feeling of it. It can be scary but, yeah… I feel brave.’

BIRD OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 8 NOVEMBER.



STICKY SITUATION

Seven years on from his last big-screen appearance, marmalade's biggest fan returns for *Paddington in Peru*. *Total Film* talks to director Dougal Wilson, actor Hugh Bonneville and the visual-effects wizards who make the magic happen...

WORDS **NEIL SMITH**

Paddington and London go together like… well, marmalade and sandwiches. Down at County Hall, next to the London Eye, The Paddington Bear Experience invites visitors to step inside 32 Windsor Gardens, travel to Peru and participate in an interactive street party. On the busy roads outside, a Paddington Afternoon Tea Bus Tour offers a view of the city's landmarks from inside a double-decker Routemaster. (Just the ticket when it's coming down in stair rods.) And at Paddington station itself, a bronze of the bear and his 'Wanted on Voyage'-labelled suitcase is a lasting memorial to its indelible connection with the late Michael Bond's creation.

Today, though, *Total Film* is in another corner of the English capital that, in its way, is just as integral to Paddington's storied legacy. Just off Fleet Street and not far from St Paul's – the setting, you'll remember, for some of Phoenix Buchanan's skulduggery in *Paddington 2* – lie the offices of Framestore, the Oscar-winning VFX company that has been bringing Bond's bear to photorealistic life since the first Paddington film's release in 2014. It's a warm day in early August, and we've been invited to inspect some of the props, shots, sets and costumes from upcoming threequel *Paddington in Peru*. Before we do, however, there's a small matter to attend to first…

You can spread a lot of marmalade in seven years. One can also develop a seven-year itch. That it's taken that long for a third Paddington film to materialise warrants a hard stare, then, even with a pandemic throwing a spanner in the works right in the middle of them. OK, so there was a short film to shoot with Queen Elizabeth for her Platinum Jubilee, a delightful surprise lent a tear-jerking poignancy by her subsequent passing. According to producer Rosie Alison, though, the real bugbear was the aforementioned *Paddington 2*, a sequel so rapturously received and universally loved (99% on Rotten Tomatoes!) that it gave its makers a quandary as formidable as Knuckles McGinty.

'We were a little taken aback by how much people loved the second film,' Alison explains. 'We were also very moved by how it seemed to resonate and connect around the world. So we were a bit daunted about doing a third and we thought long and hard about it. We were never going to do it unless we felt it had a real reason to be.' The idea of returning Paddington to his native Peru – a locale only briefly seen in the initial two instalments – provided that reason. Before it could be developed, however, a new director was called for, Paul King having opted to seek new terrain of his own with 2023's musical fantasy *Wonka*. King remains involved as an executive producer and conceived *Paddington in Peru*'s story with Simon Farnaby and *Farmageddon*'s Mark Burton. Burton then went on to write the script with Jon Foster and James Lamont, co-creators of the animated TV series *The Adventures of Paddington*.

'When Paul felt he wanted to branch out and do something different, we needed to find somebody to step into his shoes,' Alison continues. 'And that was daunting too, because that mix of visual brilliance, heart and humour isn't easy to find.' One candidate blessed with all of those qualities was a certain Dougal Wilson, a director who'd caught Rosie's eye with his innovative music videos (Coldplay's *Life in Technicolor II*, Goldfrapp's *Happiness*) and a charming series of Christmas adverts he'd made for John Lewis. *Paddington in Peru*, though, would be his feature debut: one that he would have to take on with a broken hip, having suffered a skiing accident a mere three months before shooting was scheduled to start.

'It was just one of those freak things,' Wilson sighs when we meet in August. 'And it wasn't even on a hard slope! I just got distracted and went down a bit I shouldn't have gone down. I then did the splits at the bottom, and realised I couldn't get up.' A crutch was never far away during production at Elstree's Sky Studios, and even found its way into some of the preparatory shorts Wilson would put together on his iPhone to finalise compositions, timing and choreography. *Total Film* gets to see a few of these so-called 'crapamatics' on Wilson's laptop, a sort of ad hoc moving storyboard with colleagues serving as guinea pigs. 'It's a lot cheaper figuring stuff out in a room with some mates than doing it on set,' reveals the director. 'I try to use all the tools available to visualise the film as vividly as I can, before the crew descends.'

> 'We were a little taken aback by how much people loved the second film… so we were a bit daunted about doing a third'
> **ROSIE ALISON**

Story co-creator Simon Farnaby also appears in the film

Antonio Banderas on set with Dougal Wilson and Rosie Alison

URSINE OF THE TIMES

Having worked with King on the first two Paddingtons and Wilson on the third, actor Hugh Bonneville is as well placed as anyone to identify what unites them. 'Both Paul and Dougal have a Paddington-like innocence, a sense of adventure and a desire to see the world through a slightly different lens,' muses the *Downton Abbey* star, back again in *Paddington in Peru* as hidebound Henry Brown. 'They have a wonderfully childlike sense of imagination and absurdity and huge heart and warmth. They're incredibly well read and well versed in film, and they know how to tell a story. As for their

STUDIOCANAL, PETER MOUNTAIN

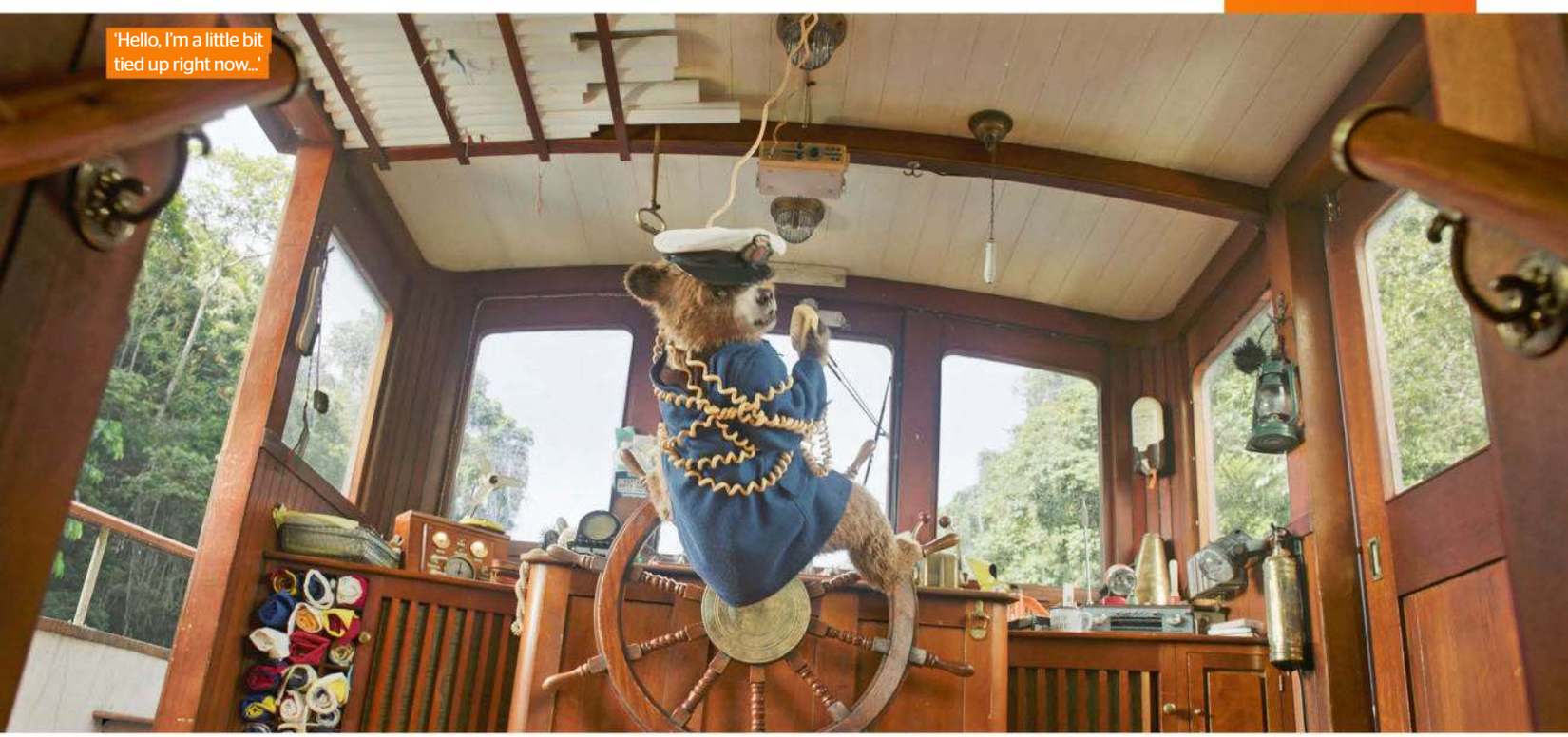
Olivia Colman strikes a chord as the Reverend Mother

differences: well, one's very tall and the other's not!' Wilson – the tall one – was 'acutely conscious of the shoes he had to fill' and was accordingly 'very nervous'. 'But he couldn't have had a better springboard than the extraordinary creative team he had around him, giving him so much confidence and support.'

Wilson isn't the only fresh addition to *Paddington in Peru*, which also has a new Mary Brown, following Sally Hawkins' departure, in Emily Mortimer. As far as Bonneville's concerned, however, it was a seamless, painless transition. 'When I heard that Sally wasn't going to do the film, the first face that popped into my head was Emily's,' he remembers. 'I thought she had all the gorgeous qualities you expect from the character. Obviously she's a totally different actress [from Sally], but I think within four seconds you've forgotten there's a new Mrs Brown. She just slotted in gloriously and we all got on brilliantly as a family unit again.' Apart from Mortimer, it's business as usual, with Julie Walters back as housekeeper Mrs Bird, Madeleine Harris returning as the Browns' daughter, Judy, and Samuel Joslin reprising his role as her nerdy brother, Jonathan. 'The main difference this time is that the kids could actually come to the pub with us,' says Bonneville of his on-screen offspring, now 23 and 22 respectively.

Time is also moving on for Paddington himself, who – after stumbling upon an ursine statuette of Peruvian origin in Mr Gruber's antique shop – decides to pay Aunt Lucy a visit at the Home for Retired Bears. It's the first time we've seen Aunt Lucy's retirement home on

> 'Emily [Mortimer] slotted in gloriously and we all got on brilliantly as a family unit again'
>
> **HUGH BONNEVILLE**



'Hello, I'm a little bit tied up right now...'

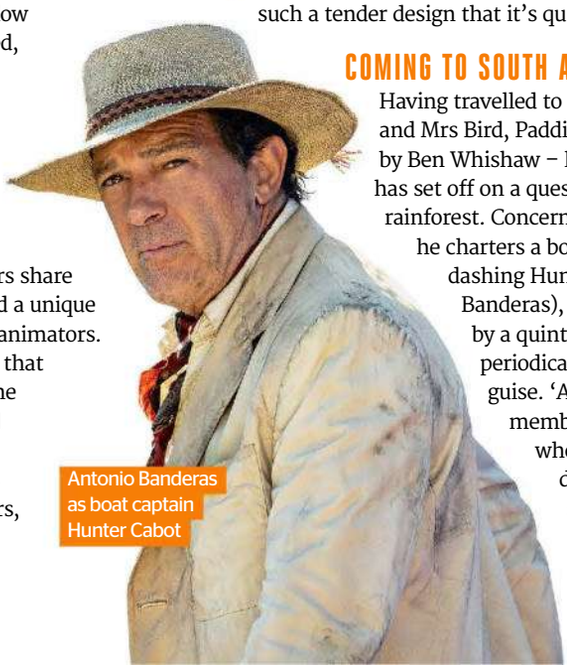
The Brown family and Mrs Bird (Julie Walters)

Antonio Banderas (in one of his many roles in the film) and Dougal Wilson

Emily Mortimer joins the Brown family at 32 Windsor Gardens

film, and Alison, for one, was determined to do it properly. 'It's such a brilliant idea and we've never had a chance to see it,' she tells *Total Film* as we explore a shuttered room at Framestore HQ full of props, décor and set miniatures. 'It's a place where bears play croquet, go on nature trips and do art and gardening classes.' Our eyes fall on a parody newspaper called *The Grrrdian* (complete with Beary Manilow interview!) and a guitar that is played, *The Sound of Music*-style, by Olivia Colman's bear-nursing Reverend Mother. 'The hills are alive with the sound of Olivia!' says Alison. 'We were thrilled she wanted to play the role, and she began guitar lessons immediately.'

Having as many as 13 ageing bears share the screen simultaneously presented a unique challenge for Framestore's army of animators. 'Dougal was really into making sure that we had a large amount of bears in the background, to make it feel real and populated,' says production VFX supervisor Alexis Wajsbrot. 'But it's inefficient to build 13 individual bears, so we built generic male and female bears and differentiated them by giving them different poses, props and proportions.' *Total Film* is given the chance to manipulate a CG bear's features using a highly sophisticated FACS (Facial Action Coding System), and is soon making it squint, chew and wiggle its ears. 'Every time we have to rebuild our Paddington I have a minor heart attack,' says animation director Pablo Grillo. 'He's such a tender design that it's quite easy to break.'



Antonio Banderas as boat captain Hunter Cabot

COMING TO SOUTH AMERICA

Having travelled to Peru with the Browns and Mrs Bird, Paddington – voiced, as ever, by Ben Whishaw – learns that his aunt has set off on a quest into the Amazonian rainforest. Concerned for her safety, he charters a boat captained by the dashing Hunter Cabot (Antonio Banderas), a man tormented by a quintet of ancestors who periodically visit him in ghostly guise. 'Antonio plays all the members of the Cabot family, who are like angels and devils on Hunter's shoulder,' says Wilson. 'We were drawing on

'I am very respectful of Paddington's legacy and I really hope people feel this film does justice to the previous two films'

DOUGAL WILSON

STUDIOCANAL, PETER MOUNTAIN

Banderas 'had a ball' playing several members of the Cabot family

The director on set: 'It wouldn't be fun without danger'

Kind Hearts and Coronets, in which Alec Guinness plays eight different D'Ascoynes.' One scene Dougal shows us, in both crapamatic and completed form, finds one of Cabot's forebears, a 16th-century conquistador, spookily emerging out of a painting. 'Antonio also appears as an Edwardian explorer, a Scottish missionary, a gold prospector and a Swedish airwoman,' says Alison. 'He had quite a ball moving between the characters who haunt Hunter's imagination.'

If you've seen the trailer, you'll know it's far from plain sailing as Paddington and the Browns wend their way down a choppy Amazon. In a viewing theatre at Framestore, Grillo and Wajsbrot reveal how second-unit shots of rapids in Colombia were spliced with boat scenes filmed on a gimbal at Elstree to create an escalating cascade of chaos for Paddington's accident-prone CG avatar. 'It was a huge jigsaw,' Wajsbrot admits. 'Usually on a movie of this scale the foregrounds are live action and the backgrounds are all CG. But we went through the pain of going to the location because it needed to feel as grounded as possible.' None of the leads went to South America, but they still got tossed like a salad on a mock-up of a boat designed to list and lurch on command. 'It did get thrown about a lot and it got a bit bumpy,' Bonneville recalls. 'But we had very good safety crews and various travel-sickness pills as required, so I think we all survived unscathed.'

Henry, it transpires, has his own reasons for being in Peru, having been encouraged by his new American boss to embrace the risk he is routinely tasked with assessing. 'He's getting on a bit, and his days at the firm might be numbered, so he has to get outside his comfort zone and confront various fears,' says Bonneville. 'One of the biggest manuals on his shelf is the one for Peru, so he could not go to a riskier place in order to appease his employer.' Waiting in the foliage for him is a fearsome, purple-kneed tarantula that swiftly becomes his nemesis. 'Mr Brown is certainly an arachnophobe and it's a huge, great big bastard!' laughs the actor. 'When you arrive in a country and you know there are certain creepy-crawlies there that you're not very keen on, you're not going to sleep easily.'

Bear in mind

Animation director Pablo Grillo on the original thinking behind Paddington's design...

'When we began the first Paddington film, there were no benchmarks yet for what we were looking for. I think it was [Harry Potter production designer] Stuart Craig who said it was very important that the bear was real. If he was going to perform with live-action actors, the only way people can believe in him is if he's photoreal.

'At the time, a lot of characters that had been turned into 3D entities were very cartoony, the Scooby-Doos and the Garfields, and that was the vernacular. But here we wanted to do something a bit more different and more realistic. The challenge for us was to retain the simplicity of a Peggy Fortnum illustration and endow it with the veneer of a hyper-real bear. It's difficult to get right, because as soon as you add teeth and detail it's hard to hold on to that elegant design [from the books].

'The other prerequisite was that he would be a comedy performer. Paul King's enthusiasm for greats like Chaplin, Keaton and Tati was very important and we had to create a bear who could perform in that style. We knew he needed to keep up with live-action actors, so his legs needed to be long enough to allow that. We also knew he would be drinking from a teapot, so his arms had to be a minimum length.

'Before the first film, there was a lot of backlash from the public. "Not our Paddington! They're going to CGI him, it'll be awful!" But over the years he has become absolutely beloved. A huge part of Paddington's persona is obviously Ben Whishaw; he's such a wonderful and generous actor and he brings so much to the character. He always yields great, natural impulses we can bring to the Paddington performance.'

NEIL SMITH

Dougal Wilson casts a careful eye over props

Peru could this be?!

After various mishaps and setbacks involving Peru's exotic flora and fauna, the action settles on a mountainous, Machu Picchu-like citadel. It's here that some of the film's wackiest stunts occur, with scenes involving rolling boulders and collapsing masonry that reverentially reference such Buster Keaton classics as *Seven Chances* and *Steamboat Bill, Jr*. 'We show maximum disrespect to archaeological ruins,' confesses Wilson. 'I am a massive fan of Keaton's, and it wouldn't be fun without some danger. Jeopardy and Paddington are kind of bedfellows, like Chaplin and his roller skates [in 1936's *Modern Times*]. But we have to watch out that we don't go too far, and that it's drama Paddington can deal with.'

'The great thing about Paddington is that he always lands on his feet,' nods Alison, who acknowledges the criticism the first Paddington received over Nicole Kidman's villainous taxidermist. 'It always turns out well for him, which is very reassuring.'

The stage is set for what Bonneville calls 'a wonderful and utterly enchanting tonic'. If it goes down as well as anticipated, would Wilson be up for a second round? 'I think it would be inviting hubris to see anything beyond this one,' responds the director. 'I am very respectful of the legacy of Paddington, and I really hope people feel it does justice to the previous two films.' The good news is that Paddington has a passport now and could conceivably go anywhere in the world his little paws can take him. Alison proudly shows us the passport, specially issued by the Home Office for the purposes of *Paddington in Peru*. 'We wrote to them to get permission, and they charmingly took up our cause,' she says. 'They decided to issue an official one, which we keep under lock and key.' It's comforting to note that the government's mandarins haven't been sleeping on the job. On the list of 'Official Observations' sits the following advisory: that its bearer is, yes, a bear.

PADDINGTON IN PERU IS IN CINEMAS FROM 8 NOVEMBER.

ROLE

After storming Cannes, transgender narcos tale *Emilia Pérez* arrives ready to change the way you think about musicals. *Total Film* joins hardboiled director Jacques Audiard and stars Karla Sofia Gascón and Zoe Saldaña to discuss the year's most radical, rousing movie.

WORDS **JAMES MOTTRAM**

JACQUES AUDIARD

Jacques Audiard doesn't sleep well at night. The 72-year-old French directof behind *A Prophet*, *Rust and Bone* and the Cannes-winning *Dheepan* is too restless, especially when he's shooting. 'So what do I do?' he asks, rhetorically. 'I use lunch breaks in order to have a nap, a 20-minute nap, and in that time, many ideas come. So when I get up again, I go back on set, I say, "OK, let's change everything." And now my crew are very scared when I go for a siesta.'

However improvisational his methodology, Audiard clearly got his Zzzs in making his new work, *Emilia Pérez*. A musical, perhaps, for those who don't like all-singin', all-dancin' extravaganzas, just like Audiard himself. 'I don't have a special taste for musicals. I don't know them. I have no culture about it,' he explains, chinwagging with *Total Film* at a hotel rooftop bar during this year's Cannes Film Festival, just after *Emilia Pérez* has been unveiled to wild applause.

No fan of Hollywood's Golden Age musicals, Audiard prefers the work of Bob

Fosse (*Cabaret*, *All That Jazz*) or Jacques Demy (*The Umbrellas of Cherbourg*), although you'd be hard-pressed to compare them to *Emilia Pérez*. A vibrant story about transgender issues and the 'disappeared' in Mexico, *Emilia Pérez* boasts contemporary subject matter that feels entirely at odds with this most heightened and colourful of genres.

The film begins as hard-working defence attorney Rita (Zoe Saldaña) is summoned to meet Manitas (Karla Sofia Gascón), a drug cartel leader with a surprising secret: he wants to transition and become a woman. When Rita agrees to facilitate this request, finding Manitas a sympathetic doctor in Tel Aviv, the procedure is performed in secret. Even his wife Jessi (Selena Gomez) and their children have no idea, believing him dead, as Manitas re-emerges as Emilia Pérez.

Yet this is just the first act of an increasingly left-field film. As Emilia aims to secretly forge connections with her family, pretending to be a long-lost aunt, it moves into melodrama before further socio-political shifts. 'It was very important that the story of a transgender [person] was reflected in the trans genre of the film,' says Audiard, seemingly confident with the film's radical transitions. 'You have soap opera, you have the narcos film, you have bourgeois comedy, and it's paced with the changes of Manitas.'

BUST A MOVE

The dance numbers choreographed by Damien Jalet (who previously worked on the eerie movements seen in Luca Guadagnino's *Suspiria* remake) are show-stopping, especially the Busby Berkeley-style 'La Vaginoplastia' routine as Manitas' gender change is underway.

The original songs, meanwhile, come written by Camille, the French singer whose real-life partner Clément Ducol provided the film's score. 'It was the very first experience for me. I have no experience in song writing, of course,' says Audiard, who calls it 'a constant back-and-forth collaboration' between them, with songs penned in French and translated into Spanish.

'What the music allowed me to do in the dramatic form is the possibility of mixing the epic feeling of narration with the dramatic elements of reality,' says Audiard, adjusting his crisp-looking panama-style hat. 'And the songs are fully integrated in the narration of the story, and they are part of the development of the story itself… so they are an element, an ingredient of the narration itself. They are not there just as a distraction.'

> 'I COULDN'T HAVE MANITAS PLAYED BY A MAN AND EMILIA PLAYED BY A WOMAN. IT HAD TO BE A TRANS ACTRESS'
>
> JACQUES AUDIARD

Finding a transgender actor to play Manitas/Emilia was crucial, certainly given the furore that the casting of Jared Leto as transgender – in a role that won him an Oscar – caused after the release of 2013's *Dallas Buyers Club*. 'I had no alternative,' shrugs Audiard. 'I couldn't [have] Manitas [played] by a man and then Emilia by a woman. It had to be a trans actress.'

He found the perfect solution in Karla Sofia Gascón, the Spanish transgender performer best known back home for soap opera *El súper*. When *TF* meets Gascón, the actress is still in shock at the reception the film got in Cannes' famous Palais. 'When I saw two thousand people crying, I didn't believe it,' she says. 'In front of me is Rossy de Palma and a lot of great actors… all people crying at the screening.'

That's not the last time that Gascón and her co-stars will soak up the plaudits. By the end of Cannes, the film will win the Jury Prize, while the four leading women claim a share of the Best Actress prize. Gascón, who became the first ever transgender woman to take this award in Cannes, took to the stage with *Avatar*'s Zoe Saldaña, Selena Gomez and Adriana Paz, who plays Epifanía, a woman who crosses paths with Emilia in unexpected ways.

Zoe Saldaña plays defence attorney Rita – hired to help Manitas flee Mexico to secretly transition into a woman

Open, excitable and chatty, Gascón admits it was 'hard work' switching between the characters of Manitas and Emilia. Or 'The beauty and the beast, Dr. Jekyll and Mrs. Hyde!' as she wryly puts it. 'It took two years of preparation to find the physicality and voice of Manitas and Perez,' she says. 'They had a lot of teachers around me for movements, for training my voice. Because I'm not a singer, I'm not a dancer. A lot of work… hard work.'

As difficult as it was, finding Manitas was an 'amazing' process. 'This guy, I say the truth… Manitas is [a mix of] Jared Leto and John Rambo!' she laughs. The voice also had a special influence. 'To find this voice is a completely crazy thing because I saw a lot of movies by Sylvester Stallone!' she says, before breaking out into a Rocky Balboa cry of 'Yo! Adrian!'

Saldaña also didn't have it easy. She was on holiday in Grand Cayman in 2022 after finishing *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3* when she got the call to go meet Audiard. 'Jacques was like, "If this is important for you, you should get on a plane and come and meet me,"' she recalls. 'I was exhausted, and I was with my children and my family. And it's not easy to travel from Grand Cayman all the way to Paris… you have to take three frickin' flights!'

Saldaña, who travelled to France with her then 19-year-old trans nephew for moral support, went straight into a screen-test process with Audiard. 'I thought, "I can't get a read on this man. I don't know if he likes me. I don't know if I suck!" After a weekend of improv and recording in the studio, Saldaña returned to Grand Cayman, still uncertain if

Selena Gomez stars as Jessi, wife of cartel boss Manitas

she had the role. 'And then I receive an email: "Jacques loved you. Everything is fine." I was like, "Oh my God!"'

GO FOR BROKE

As for Selena Gomez, Audiard was in the dark about this former Disney Channel star. 'I was not familiar with her, with the exception of her performances in [Harmony Korine's] *Spring Breakers* and the Woody Allen film [2019's *A Rainy Day in New York*]. 'We met in New York and I was immediately mesmerised by her, with the exception that, despite her name, she doesn't speak Spanish [fluently]. That was the thing. I told her, 10 minutes after we met in this cafe, you're hired; she did not believe me!'

The 32-year-old Gomez, best known for teen-idol status and the 424 million followers she's accumulated on Instagram, may yet see this as a moment of transition herself, into more adult roles. 'By not knowing about her as a personality, as a person, he was able to take a chance on her and give her a fair opportunity, and look at what she did,' marvels Saldaña. 'I can't see else anybody playing Jessi.'

While Gomez is indeed sensational in the film, much like her co-stars, she modestly told Associated Press during Cannes that she wasn't that taken with her own work. 'I'm not as happy with what I feel like I could have done in Spanish… I hope that it doesn't hinder my performance, and I'm really grateful for the opportunity. Perhaps I could have had more time with it. But I was full throttle, and I wanted to be a part of this so badly.'

Aside from finding a unique way of dealing with gender reassignment, the film also takes a genuinely surprising turn when the re-emerging Emilia and Rita work together to campaign for the 'disappeared' in Mexico, those who have vanished amid the cartel crime-wave epidemic. 'If you're going to create a character like Manitas, you definitely needed to highlight that and you need to give her that type of redemption,' suggests Saldaña.

Fully exploring a political issue that has long blighted Latin America, Gascón adds, 'I think this film is about the fight between the darkness and the light, and I love this message. We can change the world. We can change all for better. And I love this way. If you think about the femininity, the love of the femininity and the violence of masculinity… I think this is the best message. For me, the next step of the evolution of the human being is the woman.'

With the film now entering the awards corridor, Gascón could yet be the first transgender actress ever to take home an Oscar. Perhaps her biggest rival might be Saldaña, who has never been nominated for an Academy Award before. But the love between them is clear. 'Watching Jacques and Karla work together, I felt like I was a fly on the wall,' says Saldaña. 'We would be doing a scene, and he would ask, "What do you guys think? I like it." And Karla would go, "I hate it! I told you, it's not what I wanted to do!" Now that's the spirit of Emilia Pérez.'

EMILIA PÉREZ IS IN CINEMAS FROM 25 OCTOBER AND STREAMS ON NETFLIX FROM 13 NOVEMBER.

Director Jacques Audiard with cast and crew on set

Karla Sofia Gascón plays drug lord Manitas, who transitions into the titular Emilia

NETFLIX, SHANNA BESSON

INTERVIEW **JAMIE GRAHAM**

‘I WAS, AND AM STILL, SURPRISED BY EVERY OPPORTUNITY. I’VE BEEN CONTINUOUS AND FEEL AT THE TOP OF MY FORM’

JEFF GOLDBLUM

Seth Brundle. Dr. Ian Malcolm. Grandmaster. Jeff Goldblum has played some titanic characters over his 50-year career, and is celebrating a half-century on our screens by going bigger than ever. First he played Zeus in Netflix show *Kaos*, and now he’s the Wizard of Oz in *Wicked*. *Total Film* meets the man behind the curtain...

PORTRAITS RACHAEL WRIGHT

RACHAEL WRIGHT/CAMERA PRESS

Jeff Goldblum, in person, is pretty much exactly what you expect from viewing Jeff Goldblum, the actor. Like *The Fly*'s Seth Brundle and *Jurassic Park*'s Dr. Ian Malcolm, he's all firing synapses and tumbling words that are irregularly separated by peculiar punctuation: staccato, syncopated, singular. His brain is like a brilliant computer that's not quite wired correctly.

Eccentric and witty, Goldblum is also impossible to keep on track, his answers liable to take hard left turns or plunge down rabbit holes. It begins the moment he pops up on Zoom, dressed smartly in a cream silk shirt and wide brown tie while perched in front of a towering painting of a military man on a horse. It's mid-September and he's in Florence, Italy, where his jazz band Jeff Goldblum and the Mildred Snitzer Orchestra is about to play the majestic Teatro Niccolini.

'Nice to see you,' he beams. 'It looks like you're in a dark, dark dungeon or something. What have they done with you?' *Total Film* explains that the sun's just gone in but the room will brighten again when it shines through the window. 'I'm coming to rescue you immediately,' he says, then rapidly changes tack. 'When you've lived as long as you have, for all these millennia, to live off the blood of other humans… you don't want to see that sun, do you?'

He's right, of course – film journalists live in darkened theatres or huddled in front of TVs protected by drawn curtains. It's in such spaces that all of us have seen Goldblum light up movies like *The Big Chill*, *The Right Stuff*, *Silverado*, *The Fly*, *The Player*, *Deep Cover*, *Jurassic Park*, *Independence Day*, *Igby Goes Down*, and, er, *Mortdecai*. He's also starred in three more Jurassic movies (*The Lost World*, *Fallen Kingdom*, *Dominion*), four Wes Anderson films (*The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou*, *The Grand Budapest Hotel*, *Isle of Dogs*, *Asteroid City*) and as flamboyant dictator Grandmaster in MCU blockbuster *Thor: Ragnarok* and Disney+ series *What If…?*

Born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in 1952, Jeffrey Lynn Goldblum was just 17 years of age when he moved to New York to become an actor. In 1971, he made his Broadway debut in Tony Award-winning rock-musical *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and his film debut came playing a thug in Michael Winner's controversial *Death Wish* (1974). Goldblum popped up in such quality fare as Robert Altman's *California Split* and *Nashville*, and Woody Allen's *Annie Hall*, and then landed a major part in Philip Kaufman's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1978), readying himself for more principal roles, and stardom, in the 80s.

Now, aged 71, he's as popular as ever. Eight-part mythological black comedy *Kaos* recently dropped on Netflix, and beloved stage musical *Wicked* – a prequel to *The Wizard of Oz*, focusing on the origin stories of the Wicked Witch of the West and Glinda the Good Witch – is about to land in cinemas. Goldblum, naturally, plays the Wizard.

'I have no career plan,' he shrugs of his astonishing longevity and continued passion and success. 'It's hoping against hope, and just casting my fate to the wind, and going on this madcap adventure of creative ambition and delight and aspiration and appetite.'

Let's relive the adventure together…

With Laura Dern and Sam Neill in 1993's *Jurassic Park*

You're about to give us a very different Wizard to what we know from *The Wizard Of Oz*…

Yes, sir, I think it is. Although I loved *The Wizard of Oz* growing up, and I'm crazy about that classic American fairy tale, you know. Throughout my whole life, it's gotten to me. The stage play, *Wicked* – that's our story. It's a sort of *Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* [laughs]. It's the 'other side of the saloon' story. But it's a new variation and rendition. It's cinematic, of course, and it's [directed by] Jon M. Chu. Boy, oh boy. I saw *In the Heights* on stage. I was moved terrifically by it. And then saw the movie. I tell ya, he's terrific. I think he's cracked the code of how to turn a stage musical… how to get naturalistic acting, and big, eye-popping musical numbers, seamlessly matched up. He's something.

The stage show *Wicked* premiered in 2003…

I saw, originally, Joel Grey [play the Wizard]. When they asked me to do the part, I went back to London, where I was, and took my kids and wife to see it. And I used many Kleenex throughout the whole show. I'm a fan of this thing.

How would you describe your Wizard? Most people know him from the 1939 movie, where he's a bumbling old man, hiding behind the curtain.

Yeah, Frank Morgan, he plays the Wizard who is the man behind the curtain, who doesn't mind scaring these poor, hopeful creatures. But then finally when he's revealed, he helps them, and wants to help her. Our story is a little different. In this version, I'm a little bipolar. Like Nikola Tesla at the beginning of the 20th century, instead of a little kiosk with a curtain covering it, I've got a workroom that is

ALAMY, GILES KEYTE/UNIVERSAL PICTURES

Goldblum plays the Wizard of Oz in the upcoming movie musical *Wicked*

kind of like I'm inventing the 20th century and all its storytelling, and snake-oil salesmanship, and showbusiness, and moviemaking, and transportation, and many things like that.

It's surprising you haven't been in more musicals, given your love of tickling the ivories…

One of my first jobs was on Broadway in a musical. I did a couple of those. And early on, I snuck it into a movie or two. I snuck it into *The Fly* – it wasn't in the script that I play the piano. I snuck it into *Earth Girls Are Easy*.

Do we get to see you sing and play in *Wicked*?

I get to do a thing or two with the great musicians and artists who are Ariana Grande and Cynthia Erivo. Which could have been intimidating, but I'm just bushy tailed and mad about the music. And they were spectacularly generous and cordial and welcoming. So we just sang every tune we knew in between every take.

You've appeared in several films of this scale. What's it like being at the centre of such spectacles?

Well, fantastic. You know, not just because I get overstimulated by attention. Not just because of that, but these particular movies that we're referencing, like *Jurassic Park* or maybe the first *Independence Day*, are crowd-pleasers, like I think *Wicked* is going to be. We know it has a fanbase that is deeply passionate, and I hope will be hungry for this, and nourished by it. So it feels like a responsibility, and a very exciting prospect.

'WE KNOW IT HAS A FANBASE THAT IS PASSIONATE'

Does it surprise you that you've starred in blockbusters like *Jurassic Park* and *Thor: Ragnarok*? You're an eccentric character actor, so it's not the most obvious fit.

I was so excited about being an actor, and I knew the chances were against ever getting to do anything [laughs]. I was, and am still, surprised by every opportunity that I still continue to get. I mean, just as surprising is the fact that I've been continuous and, in fact, feel at the top of my form. So, yes. It's all been surprising. I've always had a taste for some of the things I was in early on. Some Robert Altman movies. And I still, thank goodness, get a chance to work with people like Wes Anderson, who are interesting artists and unique auteurs. Because a lot of that is the cinema that interests me still.

How do you find working with Wes? You're spontaneous and like to improv; he's so precise. Does that cause any friction?

Maybe I could elaborate a little on his particular variation of meticulousness, which is, to me, absolutely delightful. Even though his material, script-wise and dialogue-wise, he wants it to be very exact – and visually, of course, he's very particular in a beautiful way – the experience is very free and deep, I find. You do many takes of something. And then he says, 'Just for pleasure, let's do some more.' And within the confines of what he's after – the variations and the nuances – what he wants is so delicious to try to achieve with him, collaboratively, that it's a pleasure.

Do you happily attune yourself to a director's vision?

I taught acting, because I'm a craft

obsessive. I worked with [actor and acting teacher] Sandy Meisner. Improvisation was part of Sandy Meisner's technique, and that's part of what I taught, and love to do. But I also told [my students], 'Look, if you want to do Shakespeare, or David Mamet' – which I've done – 'or work with Wes Anderson or the Coen brothers or Aaron Sorkin or all sorts of people who are very particular, you have to know what to do.' And then if you work with these cinematographers… Some will go, 'I'm not lighting it. You go, and I'll follow you.' But some people say, 'Can you find a reason to justify doing this?' [Rotates his face an inch to the right]. I go, 'Great! I can do anything. Tell me what to do, and I'll justify it, and find a freedom and enjoyment within that.'

It's been 50 years since your first screen role: *Death Wish*, for Michael Winner. You followed it with *California Split* and *Nashville* for Robert Altman. Did that volte-face give you whiplash?
Death Wish struck a chord and did something, whatever its politics were. Michael Winner… My very first shot is three of us skulking up the stairs. He said, 'OK, let's see you three skulk up those stairs. Wait a minute, wait a minute… Go! Start acting now!' It scared me. But that's not the worst piece of directing in the world: 'Start acting now.' Sometimes that's all there is to say. Of course, then, yes, it was a shift of flavour to go with Robert Altman in those movies. I think *California Split* is a wonderful movie, and *Nashville* is highly esteemed. It's one of his high watermarks. That was a hotbed of grand adventure.

Creative and free-wheeling?
Yes, yes. Absolutely. He said, 'We're just going to use this script as a kind of jumping-off point.' And before I came, he called up from Nashville – I was in New York. He said, 'You know any magic? Any sleight of hand?' I said, 'No, I've never done it.' He said, 'Let's find you somebody who's in Manhattan. Take a crash course.' I did, and I came down there with a bag of tricks. I showed him all my stuff. And he said, 'Oh, good, good. I know exactly what we're going to do with that.' And, sure enough, we put some of that stuff in. So, yeah, that was a creative and free and beautiful experience.

You had a small part in *Annie Hall* and so did Christopher Walken. Did you guys meet? And if so, was it the most staccato, strangely punctuated conversation ever?
That's so funny. We've met. We've never

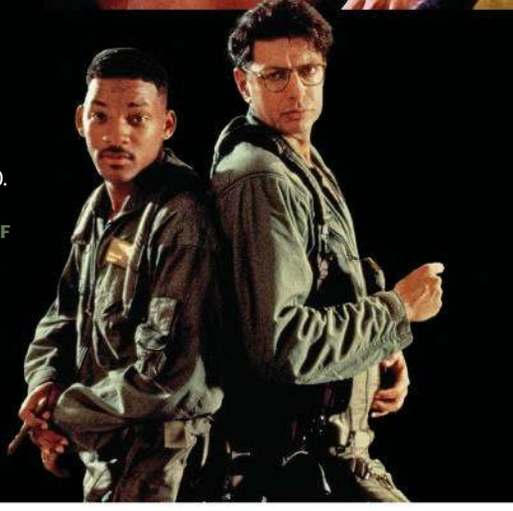
FIVE STAR TURNS

THE BIG CHILL 1983
Lawrence Kasdan's classic comedy-drama about grief and friendship. Goldblum plays Michael, a disillusioned journalist who bemoans the fact that, 'You can't write anything longer than the average person can read during the average crap'. Imagine his thoughts on smartphones.

THE FLY 1986
David Cronenberg ups the ick, pathos and romance for this superlative body horror. Like 1978's *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* – Goldblum's character-actor breakout – it's a rare remake that surpasses the original.

JURASSIC PARK 1993
As rockstar mathematician Dr. Ian Malcolm, Goldblum brought wry wit, heroism and sex appeal to Spielberg's dino classic. As well as snatching the lion's share of the film's iconic quotes ('Life, uh, finds a way'), Malcolm's defining moment – lighting the flare – was a Goldblum suggestion.

INDEPENDENCE DAY 1996
Playing another motor-mouthed genius (this one a divorced satellite engineer), Goldblum grounds Roland Emmerich's alien invasion blockbuster opposite an up-and-coming Will Smith.



THE GRAND BUDAPEST HOTEL 2014
In the second (of four) sublime Wes Anderson collaborations, Goldblum plays Deputy Kovacs, the executor of Madame D.'s will who gets on the wrong side of Adrien Brody's hot-headed Dmitri and his attack dog Jopling (Willem Dafoe). The pursuit around the Kunstmuseum may be Anderson's single greatest suspense sequence. JF

ALAMY

had a scene together, but we have been in four movies together. We found ourselves in the same hotel, in the same city, and then we finally had a meal together, and talked about every little thing. We didn't talk that much about our technique. I've heard him talk about taking out the punctuation, and making it his own, and different things. I'd like to talk to him about that. And he has said to me, 'Hey, you and I should do something together.' We both like dance. I love to see him dance. So, yeah, it'd be fun to do something with him. I love him.

You mentioned doing some satisfying character work at the start of your career. There was also *The Big Chill*, *The Right Stuff* and *Silverado*…
Yeah. It was just at the right moment for me. *The Big Chill* was 1983 – that was 10 years after I started. It's nice that I got smaller parts that led to bigger parts. And *Silverado*, yeah, I felt very lucky to be in that. And then I did those two movies with Philip Kaufman, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and *The Right Stuff*. He is an erudite, sophisticated, smart, gentle, wonderful man, and a wonderful moviemaker and artist. Michael Chapman [*Taxi Driver*, *Raging Bull*] was his cinematographer on [*Invasion of the Body Snatchers*]. That's good company. Jeez, I felt lucky.

***Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and *The Fly* are two of the classic remakes of horror sci-fi movies. Did you feel, on set, you were making something special?**
Philip Kaufman and David Cronenberg… their total filmmaker ways really made it feel like we were possibly going to do something special. So, yes, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*… I'd seen the original one [1956], and it was a different era. It had a smart idea about that. And with everybody involved, and that cast, and Donald Sutherland… [As for] *The Fly*… Well, I'd seen, you know, Vincent Price do that one [in 1958]. We were obviously going for something very different, and thank goodness for the artistry and mastery and unique bravery of David Cronenberg. That's what you want.

Do you feel that *The Fly* changed your career?
Yes. My market value… My manager said, 'Oh, some more scripts are coming in.' I felt like, yes, I've taken a step forward. There was more to chew on. It felt like a bit of a growth spurt.

> *'ACTING DEMANDS THAT YOU USE ALL OF YOURSELF'*

Did it surprise you how much of a success it was, considering how boundary-pushing its make-up prosthetics were?
Yes. But I'm thrilled that not only did it ring the bell then, but it continues to be something that people say to me, 'Hey, I really liked you in that.' It seems to have some continued interest.

People also still remember you for the rambunctious sex scene you share with Emma Thompson in *The Tall Guy*. Love scenes can be precise and awkward, but it looks like you guys just had a blast…
The whole shoot was dreamy. Richard Curtis, you know, that was his first script. Just great. He's a delight. Emma Thompson – that was her first movie. She's a spectacular thinker, and artist, and a person of integrity and humanity and soulfulness and kindness and hilarity and humour. I just did a couple of explicit scenes in *Kaos*. It's different now. There were intimacy coordinators in rehearsal the day before, and there [on the day]. And I was glad for that, and everybody, I think, was very comfortable. Even the method-y actors that we all are, we know when it needs to be an illusion, and how to choreograph that. But earlier on, it was not as much like that. Emma Thompson was very generous.

Probably the average person on the street thinks of Jeff Goldblum as playing characters who are offbeat brainiacs. Does that come from you? You're obviously articulate and your brain ricochets at 100mph…
Thanks. But no, I've been helped by the characters. Ian Malcolm is much smarter than I am. I'm not a chaotician. I'm not a scientist. I'm not even a doctor like my dad. I did well at school, I can tell you that. I made good grades. But I immediately went to pursue acting, and I tried to apply my intelligence, such as it is, and heart and soul to all of that. And, thank goodness, acting demands that you use all of yourself. I like science. I like the world of poetry and passion and romance and culture, and all aspects of the human experience and engagement. And, you know, with my devotion to the unseen and the miraculous and the magical and the fantastical and the imaginary – that's a part of me. But I certainly feel lucky to play these characters that are more brave and funny and smart than I ever could be.

When you were making the first *Jurassic Park*, how much of it was an act of

JEFF GOLDBLUM IN NUMBERS

22
Goldblum's age when his first film – *Death Wish* – was released in 1974.

3
Albums released by his jazz band Jeff Goldblum & The Mildred Snitzer Orchestra.

25 FT
The height of a (temporary) shirtless Ian Malcolm statue erected next to Tower Bridge in 2018 to mark 25 years of *Jurassic Park*.

1
Directing credit, for the Oscar-nominated 1996 short *Little Surprises*.

73
Films with Robert Altman.
Feature film credits to date, including voice roles.

faith, with regards to the CGI?
That movie was only possible because Dennis Muren at ILM and Stan Winston all got together, and they pioneered the new technology to make dinosaurs like you've never seen them. I didn't know about that. It was just a matter of faith in Steven [Spielberg]. They showed us some things. But I don't know if they told us the whole story, like, 'Hey, this wouldn't have been possible a year ago. But we're doing this because I *think* this is going to work…' Dennis Muren was there, and I suppose I could have asked more questions, and seen more things. Stan Winston's work was there for all the world to see. Now, the first time we came upon that triceratops in Hawaii, the puppeteers were behind a thing, so all you saw was this life-sized triceratops. For all the world, it looked better than anything I'd ever seen.

'YOU WANT TO BE TRANSFORMED, AND ENHANCED, BY EVERYTHING YOU DO'

Reacting to CGI that would be added in later was a new discipline…
Yeah. But when you do plays, you look stage left, and say, 'Oh my gosh, the Russian Army is coming up the trail…' You're just making it up, and you have to pretend that you're seeing stuff. And as everyone knows, this whole green screen world has developed. It's just a different, fun, little exercise. At first, it was more primitive. Steven would be on a bullhorn, you know, going, 'OK, look at that tennis ball everybody. And "GRRRRRRR!"' He made a dinosaur sound. But by the time I did some of the later [movies] – you know, the soundstage was filled with soundtrack music when they weren't recording dialogue, and then some dinosaur sounds, as needed.

The most recent Jurassic World movie, *Dominion*, was panned. Do you feel the critics were harsh?
I had such a good time on it. We were at the beginning of COVID-19, you know, and we were at Pinewood. It was another very enjoyable experience, and getting together again with Laura Dern and Sam Neill. I was concentrating on trying to make our responsibility there a success, and fulfil our part of the bargain. I enjoyed working on it, and enjoyed trying to make it good. I think it sold a bunch of tickets. But, you know… [laughs] Everybody's got an opinion about it. It's tough to make a good movie. That original one… I mean, Steven Spielberg, that's why he's so terrific. He knows how to tell a story, and make a really good movie that works.

***Independence Day* had a similar thing. The first one was beloved, the second one, not so much.**
Yeah. It's tough to make a good movie. It's tricky. It's a lucky thing. A lot of things have to be working at the same time. I can just do what I get to do [laughs].

Talking of what you get to do, the most famous line Dr. Ian Malcolm says is: 'Life, uh, finds a way.' Did you put in the 'uh' or was that in the script?
I don't know if anybody's asked me that. 'Life…' [Tries to find the rhythm in his head] You know, sometimes people will put in, especially if I'm playing it [laughs].

RAGHAEL WRIGHT / CAMERA PRESS

Goldblum plays Zeus in comic fantasy *Kaos*

But I have a feeling that was not in it. I hate to take credit. And if I'm a little bit confused, I'd rather give the credit, and say it was there all along. But as I sit here, your honour, right here, today, I would have to say: I think I rendered that. You know, 'Life, uh, finds a way.' I think it was my attempt to make it seem like I was making it up. 'Life, uh, f-finds a way.' There it is [laughs].

Will we see Dr. Ian Malcolm again, or is that it now?
I think Ian Malcolm may have ridden off into the sunset. Maybe. Because this next one [*Jurassic World Rebirth*] – my friend Scarlett Johansson and my new friend Jonathan Bailey from *Wicked*, I think, are taking up the reins. And I can't wait to see what they do. I think that's a good idea.

We haven't mentioned Grandmaster yet. How did you see that character when you played him in *Ragnarok*? He's a dictator, with slaves. Did you see him as a bad guy?
I think I tried to find ways that I could make that character a little complicated, or, you know, knotty.

Is it fun being part of the MCU?
It was fun doing that, I'll tell you. And fun running into Kevin Feige. Everybody was very nice to me. And that movie was very well-received and enjoyed. And Taika [Waititi, director] was terrific. I had a good time on that. We did it in Australia, on the Gold Coast. That was the stomping grounds of the Hemsworths, of course, whom I love. I got to meet their parents. And being part of that world? I went to Atlanta at one point, and took a kind of class picture [with] Robert Downey Jr. and everybody. Scarlett Johansson was there, and then we ran into each other later, on the set of *Asteroid City*.

More of a bad guy than Grandmaster, perhaps, is Zeus in *Kaos*. He's a bit of a tyrant. How was it exploring your dark side?
Yes, yes, I like that part. Even though it may be, you know, adjacent to Grandmaster, or maybe even the Wizard of Oz, it's different. I love Charlie Covell, and Charlie's writing, I thought, was profound and hilarious and moving and complicated. We tried, of course, in this modern variation [of Greek mythology], to make all the characters particularly human and naturalistic. To make it real in some way, if one could possibly imagine that, speaking of vampires and people who live a long time, off of the crushed souls of others. I was thrilled to do it.

Will there be a Season 2? Season 1 ends rather openly…
Well, I think it depends on how things go. Charlie Covell has many ideas and aspirations, and we'll see if there's an interest in it.

Another dark role for you, in a different way, was playing a Holocaust survivor in Paul Schrader's *Adam Resurrected*. Given your Jewish heritage, that must have been painful to explore…
Painful in an enjoyable way, and in a creative way. That's what I've always, you know, had a hankering for. I mean, Paul Schrader, what a pillar and a landmark of… I mean, *Taxi Driver* and *Raging Bull*, and all his movies. What a thinker, and what an archivist. I did all sorts of research – documentaries and movies about that subject, and I visited Majdanek, one of the most intact concentration camps that's still around that one can visit. I went to Yad Vashem in Israel. I'd never been to Israel before. Paul and I went to Jerusalem.

Can you leave all of that behind? After doing that research, and living it, in a way, does the darkness become a part of you?
Yeah. It changes you. Well, that's what you're looking for, anyway. You want to be transformed, and enhanced, and deepened by everything you do, in one way or another, and more connected to yourself, and more connected to the world, and history, and your own history, and the possibility of the human species. So, yeah, it changed me.

It's all part of your remarkable 50-year career. So what's left? Is there anything on this journey that you haven't done yet?
I'm getting opportunities here and there to look at possible things to work on. But I'm being particularly picky right now, which I'm deeply grateful to be able to do. I love spending time with my kids. I don't want to be too far away from my kids and wife. But things right now are… peachy.

WICKED OPENS IN CINEMAS ON 22 NOVEMBER.

JEFF GOLDBLUM LINE READING

'HEY, MR. DAVIS, I FORGOT MY MANTRA.'
PARTY GUEST
ANNIE HALL

'Most people would give anything to be turned into something else.'
SETH BRUNDLE
THE FLY

'YEAH, BUT YOUR SCIENTISTS WERE SO PREOCCUPIED WITH WHETHER THEY COULD THAT THEY DIDN'T STOP TO THINK IF THEY SHOULD.'
DR. IAN MALCOLM
JURASSIC PARK

ALAMY

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MATTHEW LEYLAND
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★★★★★
KENT GET ANY BETTER

★★★★½
KAL-EL-DOSCOPIC ENTERTAINMENT

★★★½★
NON TOO SHABBY

★★★★★
GOES FROM BAD TO URSA

★★★★★
SEND IT TO THE PHANTOM ZONE

SCREEN

THE WORLD'S MOST TRUSTED MOVIE

78

SUPER/MAN: THE CHRISTOPHER REEVE STORY
The Clark knight...

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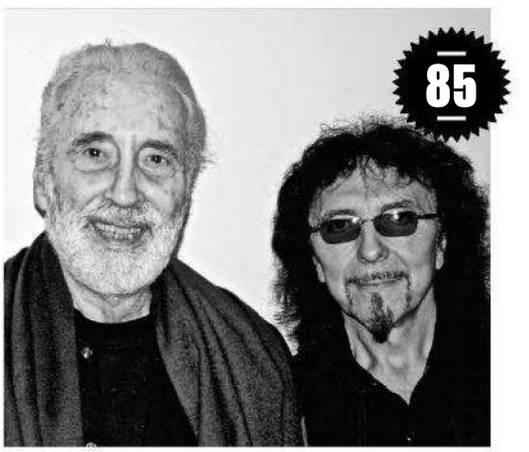

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ALAMY

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ALSO RELEASED

We couldn't see them in time for this issue, so head to gamesradar.com/totalfilm for these reviews:

TITLE	RELEASE DATE
Heretic	1 November
Juror #2	1 November
Smile 2	17 October
Venom: The Last Dance	25 October

For more reviews visit gamesradar.com/totalfilm

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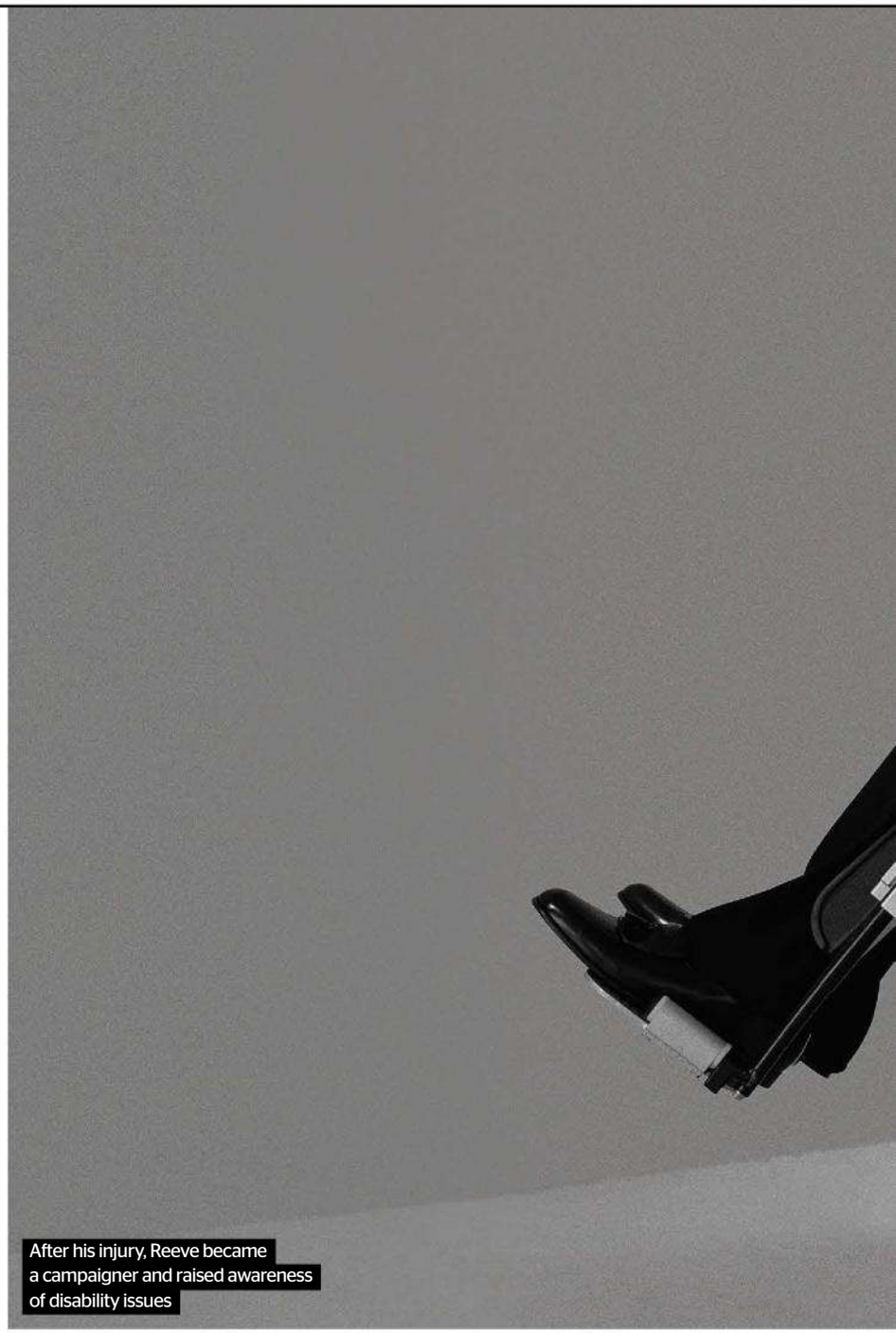
REVIEWS

SUPER/MAN: THE CHRISTOPHER REEVE STORY 12A

Not all heroes wear capes...

★★★★★ **OUT 1 NOVEMBER** CINEMAS



After his injury, Reeve became a campaigner and raised awareness of disability issues

SEE THIS IF YOU LIKED

SUPERMAN
1978
You'll believe a man can fly, thanks not only to FX wizardry but to Reeve's sheer commitment.

McQUEEN
2018
Bonhôte and Ettedgui's earlier doc takes on another big character: fashion maven Alexander McQueen.

ROBIN'S WISH
2020
Reeve's great friend Robin Williams takes centre stage in this intimate life portrait.

For more reviews visit gamesradar.com/totalfilm

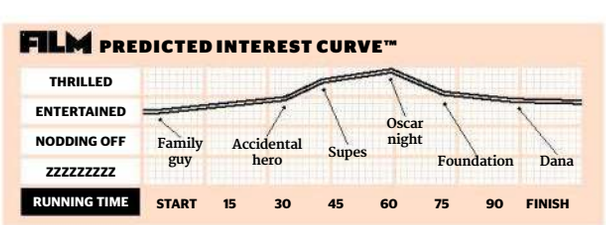
We need all the heroes we can get,' says Christopher Reeve near the start of Ian Bonhôte and Peter Ettedgui's documentary, a film about a man who truly redefined heroism. Reeve, a handsome New York-born theatre actor, became a global superstar when he took the lead as the Man of Steel and his alter ego Clark Kent in Richard Donner's *Superman* in 1978. But it was his accident in 1995, when a fall from a horse left him paralysed from the neck down, that turned Reeve from a popular actor into a beacon of hope for millions.

Bonhôte and Ettedgui have tackled iconhood (2018's *McQueen*) and disability (2020's *Rising Phoenix*) in their films before; *Super/Man* fuses both subjects. It was made with the cooperation of Reeve's family: his now-grown-up children Matthew, Alexandra and Will all contribute, offering some heart-on-sleeve recollections about their father. The fact that Will celebrated his third birthday in the ICU just after Reeve's accident is just one poignant detail among many.

True, those expecting a documentary fully focused on Reeve's tenure as Krypton's last son may come away slightly disappointed. That's not to say the directors ignore the quartet of Super-movies that made Reeve a star; far from it. There are some lovely nuggets of cine-trivia, not least that Robert Redford, Neil Diamond and Arnold Schwarzenegger were all, at various points, in the frame to don the red cape, pre-Reeve. As for the star's eventual casting, we gain insight from Jeff Daniels, who talks about being in a theatre troupe with Reeve when he went to London to audition for the big role, despite advice from another actor, William Hurt, that he shouldn't take on such a populist character.

Yet perhaps because Reeve himself eventually became disenchanted with the films (especially the 'catastrophe' that was 1987's *Superman IV: The Quest for Peace*), the film chooses not to say too much more about them – there is so much else to cover, after all. *Super/Man* essentially hinges on Reeve's accident and the remarkable courage he mustered after being so badly injured he needed assistance breathing. Employing some startling home-movie footage, Bonhôte and Ettedgui go to great lengths to capture the fortitude with which Reeve endured his changed circumstances.

Among many tear-jerking moments, special mention must go to Reeve's appearance at the 1996 Oscars, when



DIRECTORS Ian Bonhôte, Peter Ettedgui
STARRING Alexandra Reeve Givens, Matthew Reeve, Will Reeve, Glenn Close, Jeff Daniels
SCREENPLAY Ian Bonhôte, Peter Ettedgui, Otto Burnham **DISTRIBUTOR** Warner Bros.
RUNNING TIME 104 mins

WARNER BROS.

he arrived on stage in his wheelchair, receiving an emotional welcome from the audience, including his good friend Robin Williams. Footage of how he made the journey to the Academy Awards – secretly airlifted and then wheeled in through the back of the Los Angeles auditorium – also captivates, underscoring the gravity of the occasion: this was the first time Reeve had properly showed himself to the world following his accident.

Of course, the irony is never lost that the actor who played a near-invulnerable superhero was struck by a tragedy that left him reliant on a respirator until the end of his life. But what makes *Super/Man* so beguiling is how it leaves us in no doubt of Reeve's fighting spirit. We see how, together with wife Dana, he established the Christopher Reeve Paralysis Foundation, spending time with politicians in Washington to raise awareness of physical disability. 'America does not let its needy citizens fend for themselves,' he says, in one stirring speech.

With engaging contributions from Reeve's pals Susan Sarandon and Glenn Close, this is a highly engrossing portrait of someone who became a hero to millions, twice over – once as Superman, and once simply as a mortal man. Propelled by some wonderful archive footage, it'll have you welling up before you know it. **JAMES MOTTRAM**

'*Super/Man* hinges on Reeve's accident and the remarkable courage he mustered after being so badly injured he needed assistance breathing'

THE VERDICT A moving portrait of a true-life hero, serving as a salutary reminder of Reeve's courage and conviction.

EMILIA PÉREZ TBC

Key change...

★★★★★ **OUT 25 OCTOBER** CINEMAS **13 NOVEMBER** NETFLIX

Director Jacques Audiard (*A Prophet*, *Rust and Bone*) leaves his comfort zone far behind with his new film. A fully engaging two-hour musical set in Mexico City, complete with dance numbers and a storyline that embraces gender reassignment and cartel violence, it's as daring as they come. With a wonderful cast led by Zoe Saldaña, Selena Gomez and terrific Spanish actor Karla Sofía Gascón, this wows in endless ways.

The plot gets under way when counsellor-at-law Rita (Saldaña) encounters drug lord Manitas Del Monte (Gascón). Two years earlier, Del Monte began hormone treatment and wants Rita to find a surgeon to complete the journey to living 'the life nature wouldn't give me'. Completing the transition, Del Monte becomes Emilia Pérez and starts life over. Even wife Jessi (Gomez) believes her husband has been killed.

With stellar songs by French singer Camille, a highly original score by Clément Ducol and striking choreography by Damien Jalet, *Emilia Pérez* shifts effortlessly from musical extravagances to a gritty underworld milieu. The latter comes to the fore when the story moves on several years, finding Pérez keen to start a campaign to locate those who have 'disappeared' in Mexico's shady crime-riddled system. Saldaña and Gomez deliver forceful performances (both in Spanish), but even they are outflanked by Gascón, who underwent gender-reassignment surgery herself. A miraculous movie. **JAMES MOTTRAM**

THE VERDICT A film where everyone brings their A-game, this reframes the musical in fascinating and surprising ways.

Karla Sofía Gascón wows as Emilia Pérez

'Don't forget your young-person's railcard...'

BLITZ TBC

London's falling...

★★★★½ **OUT 1 NOVEMBER** CINEMAS **22 NOVEMBER** APPLE TV+

A more mainstream offering than we might expect from Sir Steve McQueen (*Shame*, *12 Years a Slave*), *Blitz* pinpoints intimate tales of Londoners during the bombings of World War Two, occasionally pulling back to reveal the awful scale of it all.

Highlighting the best and worst of humanity with a detailed sweep that is, at times, positively Spielbergian, this gorgeously crafted but frequently intense drama will invite comparisons to *Empire of the Sun* (1987) – not least because much of the action is seen through a young boy's POV. In 1940, munitions worker Rita (Saoirse Ronan, excellent) packs George (strong newcomer Elliott Heffernan) off to the countryside, only for him to jump from the journeying train and embark on an incident-packed odyssey back to Stepney Green.

Exquisitely lensed in a muted palette that's rudely shattered by some devastatingly immediate set-pieces, *Blitz* feels like a gloriously old-fashioned epic shot through a modern lens. McQueen potently handles themes of race, class and gender, while flashbacks allow for jolts of excitement – a rowdily sensual party scene recalls the *Lovers Rock* episode of the writer/director's *Small Axe* anthology.

As the traumas pile one on top of another, George's mindset slips into a heightened, surreal space, allowing us to bear witness to a symphony of distress. Yet the human spirit will not be extinguished, and McQueen celebrates it without recourse to sentiment. **JAMIE GRAHAM**

THE VERDICT Cinematic drama that fully immerses viewers in a time and place but offers links to our divided present.

ALTITUDE, APPLE, DISNEY, NETFLIX, PARAMOUNT, PARKLAND, SHANNA BESSON, TAPE COLLECTIVE

TRANSFORMERS ONE PG

The land before Prime...

★★★★★ **OUT 11 OCTOBER** CINEMAS

Hasbro's robo-chameleons get a shiny new upgrade in Josh Cooley's film, a CG-animated prequel that reignites the spark that's so often been conspicuously absent from the live-action Transformers flicks.

Doing away with humans helps. Instead, Cooley's (*Toy Story 4*) Cybertron-set adventure focuses on the hitherto-untold origin stories of the heroic Optimus Prime and his nemesis Megatron. Introduced to us as lowly mining bots Orion Pax (Chris Hemsworth) and D-16 (Brian Tyree Henry), the dynamic duo start off as friends who gain a chance to elevate their station when their overlord Sentinel Prime (Jon Hamm) holds a (*The Wrong Trousers*-esque) road race. The frenzy that ensues makes for an exhilarating *Ready Player One*-like set-piece – albeit one that leaves Pax and 'D' forced to seek another route to the planet's mysterious exterior.

To say *Transformers One* is a cut above most of its predecessors perhaps isn't the wildest compliment, given the nadirs those blockbusting behemoths reached in the Michael Bay-directed era. But it earns that laurel regardless, its trio of scriptwriters deploying familiar Star Wars tropes (the Anakin/Obi-Wan-type rift, an expositional hologram) and a rug-pulling reveal to engineer a storyline that feels both dramatically satisfying and emotionally engaging. If the battle finale succumbs to the franchise's customary bombastic overkill, you'll at least care a little about who's doing the fighting. **NEIL SMITH**

THE VERDICT A visually-striking overhaul of well-oiled IP that suggests animation was the right path all along.

A robot (not currently in disguise)

THE 4:30 MOVIE 15

★★★★★ **OUT NOW** CINEMAS
21 OCTOBER DIGITAL

Kevin Smith expands his View Askewniverse with a sweet but slight teen-com charting the travails of high-schooler Brian (Austin Zajur) as he tries to bring his crush (Siena Agudong) along to the titular cinema showing in 1986. Brian is essentially Smith, and all roads lead to Quick Stop Groceries via a slew of cameos, knowing (and slightly smug) film gags ('No one will ever pay to see a Batman movie', etc) and an end-credits blooper reel. Smith fans will lap up the nostalgia, but non-converts may find all the in-jokery a little tiresome.
JANE CROWTHER

ROAD DIARY: BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN AND THE E STREET BAND

TBC
★★★★★ **OUT 25 OCTOBER** DISNEY+

Springsteen carpe diems for dear life in this behind-the-scenes portrait of his post-Covid tour. Long-haul collaborator Thom Zimny directs and a whiff of official sanction hovers nearby, but the thrill of seeing the Boss' old band whip themselves into concert shape is tangible. Emotions run deep come showtime, too, as Springsteen digs into themes of friendship and loss through a carefully structured set list. Performing is his job's 'beating heart', he says, and it beats loud and clear here. **KEVIN HARLEY**

THE CRIME IS MINE TBC

★★★★★ **OUT 18 OCTOBER** CINEMAS

The third in a loose trilogy of female-centric period farces (see also 2002's *8 Women* and 2010's *Potiche*), writer/director François Ozon's latest is a lightly diverting adap of 1934 French play *Mon Crime*, tailored to the #MeToo era. The plot focuses on Madeleine (*Rosalie*'s Nadia Tereszkiewicz), a penniless Parisian actor who is accused of murdering a predatory theatre producer. Briskly paced and awash with visual and verbal references to other films and plays, it's buoyed along by a fine ensemble cast, including Rebecca Marder, Dany Boon, and Isabelle Huppert as a formidable silent-movie diva. **TOM DAWSON**

MILISUTHANDO TBC

★★★★★
OUT 18 OCTOBER CINEMAS

Award-winning writer Milisuthando Bongela turns first-time filmmaker with this intimate and very personal documentary essay. Spanning 30 years of South African history, it sees the director tell the story of how she grew up during apartheid, yet only became aware of it after the fact. A poetic take on the coming-of-age film, it proceeds in nonlinear fashion, conjuring a moving scrapbook of images accompanied by a chorus of voices from Bongela's past. Above all, it's an evocative and at times profound meditation on love, race and femininity. **JOEL HARLEY**

'Love the colour scheme, babes, but it's giving me retina burn'

THE ROOM NEXT DOOR 12A

Friends till the end...

★★★★★ **OUT 25 OCTOBER** CINEMAS

Pedro Almodóvar fans may be wrongfooted by the writer/director's first full-length English-language feature, an atypically austere entry in his canon that's nevertheless as vivid and haunting as much of his other work.

Adapting Sigrid Nunez's novel *What Are You Going Through*, Almodóvar examines friendship and death via two reconnected ex-colleagues: author Ingrid (Julianne Moore) and war correspondent Martha (Tilda Swinton). Martha is battling stage-three cervical cancer and wants a 'good death', so asks her friend to accompany her to an upstate New York rental for reading, relaxing and, ultimately, euthanasia. The women recall their past (including their romantic dalliances with John Turturro's eco-warrior), explore their relationship to mortality and cherish the wonder of life.

Although restrained for an Almodóvar movie, *TRND* is filled with colour (pistachio sun loungers, pink snowflakes and, of course, pops of signature red), passion and intrigue. Deftly navigating a script that takes in poetry, John Huston films and environmental concerns, Moore and Swinton excel as accomplished women who worry about their failings.

The only real misstep is in Swinton playing her character's lookalike daughter, which feels odd when her younger self is embodied by a luminous Esther McGregor. But in a film exploring the concept of legacy, it's a conceit that doesn't overly impact on the overall richness of the material. **JANE CROWTHER**

THE VERDICT The deserving winner of Venice's Golden Lion Award, Almodóvar's discourse on death is teeming with life.

IN RESTLESS DREAMS: THE MUSIC OF PAUL SIMON 12

★★★★★ **OUT 13 OCTOBER** CINEMAS
28 OCTOBER DVD, BD, DIGITAL

Moving back and forth through the years, Alex Gibney's (*Taxi to the Dark Side*) documentary is an expansive portrait of one of the all-time musical greats. Through a mixture of interview and archive, it covers everything from Simon's first collab with Art Garfunkel, to the recording of his 2023 solo album *Seven Psalms*, keeping the creative process front and centre. The main draw, of course, is the chance to hear different versions of Simon's ageless songs – so beautiful they still stop you in your tracks, 60 years on. **MATT GLASBY**

MIDAS MAN 12

★★★★★ **OUT 30 OCTOBER**
PRIME VIDEO

Film's Fabs fixation continues with Joe Stephenson's sensitive portrait of 'fifth Beatle' Brian Epstein. The story unfolds like an 'Eppy' (Jacob Fortune-Lloyd) best-of, box-ticking moments in the furniture salesman's life as he undergoes a Cavern Club epiphany and begins managing the band; meanwhile, he wrestles with his sexuality and addictions. Though strong turns from Fortune-Lloyd and the mop-tops endear, the under-powered plot never quite summons sufficient momentum or music: sadly, a shot of a 7" can't compensate for the lack of access to Beatles tunes. **KEVIN HARLEY**

BLACK BOX DIARIES 15

★★★★★ **OUT 25 OCTOBER** CINEMAS

Nimbly stitched together from covert recordings, tearful video diaries and fly-on-the-wall reportage, this astonishingly intimate documentary tracks Japanese journalist Shiori Itô's culture-changing fight for justice. Investigating on camera why her 2016 report of sexual assault by a high-flying media figure was rejected by Tokyo police, Itô tenaciously battles stonewalling officials, sinister surveillance and hideous public harassment. A fascinating, close-up look at how Itô refused to be a victim of crime or the legal system, it captures her gutsiness alongside her grim ordeal. **KATE STABLES**

A SUDDEN GLIMPSE TO DEEPER THINGS TBC

★★★★★ **OUT 18 OCTOBER** CINEMAS

'The story of the brain of a forgotten visionary': that's how Mark Cousins (*The Story of Film*) pitches his latest cine-essay, a lyrical tribute to Scottish artist Wilhelmina Barns-Graham, who died aged 91 in 2004. Two factors are offered as keys to the artist's singular vision: her synaesthesia (which meant she associated numbers and letters with colours), and a trip to the Grindelwald glacier in Switzerland, where she had an artistic and spiritual epiphany. A lengthy slideshow of Barns-Graham's paintings gives a vivid sense of how she saw the world anew. **TOM DAWSON**

WARNER, ALTITUDE, PRIME VIDEO, DOGWOOF, CONIC, UNIVERSAL STUDIOCANAL

THE WILD ROBOT U

Tech shelter...

★★★★★ **OUT 18 OCTOBER** CINEMAS

In the near-ish future, ROZZUM 7134 is the only surviving unit of a cargo of server-robots washed up on an island wilderness. Crab-crawling up the cliff-face – using the first of many skills she'll mimic from the island's wildlife – humanoid 'Roz' (an excellent Lupita Nyong'o) makes a home in the woodland.

The most striking thing about *The Wild Robot* is how it continues mainstream animation's ongoing visually inventive streak (the Spider-Verse movies, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Mutant Mayhem*). This CG-animated film has a painterly quality that's delightful to gawp at, and makes the ideal canvas for the tech-meets-nature story.

Along the way, Roz bonds with Fink the fox (a spry Pedro Pascal) and Paddler the beaver (Matt Berry); the breathing, snarling life imbued into these creatures recalls writer/director Chris Sanders' previous successes (*Lilo & Stitch*, *How to Train Your Dragon*). But Roz's most heartwarming connection is with gosling Brightbill (Kit Connor), a runt she adopts after a tragic accident.

There's a touching theme about becoming more than you're programmed to be, so it's a slight shame *The Wild Robot* can't completely resist formula, leaning into high-tech action in the third act. This, like some of the too-modern gags elsewhere, feels at odds with the general vibe of lovingly rendered originality. But compared to the average family-friendly animation, this is very much an upgrade. **MATT MAYTUM**

THE VERDICT Despite minor stumbles, this gorgeous toon is at its best when dealing with nature and nurture.

Lupita Nyong'o voices the shipwrecked humanoid

The man who would be king: Sebastian Stan as the future POTUS

THE APPRENTICE TBC

Trump start...

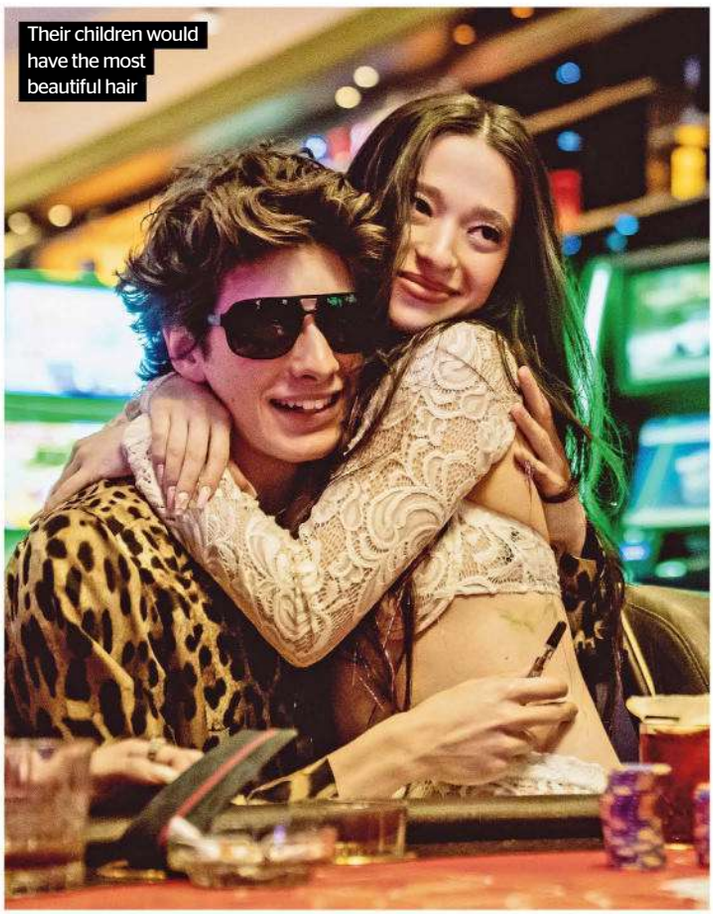
★★★☆☆ **OUT 18 OCTOBER** CINEMAS

Spanning the 70s and 80s, this lively-if-limited study of Donald Trump's real-estate years kicks in with the ambitious Trump (Sebastian Stan) befriended by Roy Cohn (Jeremy Strong), an attorney who's been indicted three times and never convicted. The young Trump becomes his mentee, learning the 'rules' of business (including 'never admit defeat'), which will stand him in good stead long before he gets to the White House.

As Trump's empire grows – New York's Grand Hyatt and Trump Tower are just the start of his portfolio – we get a glimpse of the man himself. Director Ali Abbasi (*Holy Spider*) and writer Gabriel Sherman (*Independence Day: Resurgence*) depict someone whose increasing love of deal-and-money-making ('Everything I do is turning to gold') comes at the expense of all personal relationships – not least the one he forms with Cohn, who goes from cocksure player to Trump lackey. Performance-wise, Stan is decent if muted, but it's *Succession*'s Strong who steals it with a multifaceted portrayal of a man scorned.

With its *Boogie Nights*-esque feel (pop songs, gritty milieu), *The Apprentice* is entertaining to a point. It plays intriguingly with Trump's idea that 'truth is a malleable thing', something that'll come to define his years in government. But whether the film truly gets under Trump's skin is debatable. Do we learn much new about him? Perhaps not, but it's an absorbing journey all the same. **JAMES MOTTRAM**

THE VERDICT This Trump biopic doesn't tower, but it's still a convincing portrait of avarice and venality.


Their children would have the most beautiful hair

ANORA 18

Crazy in love...

★★★★★ **OUT 1 NOVEMBER** CINEMAS

Writer/director Sean Baker (*The Florida Project*, *Red Rocket*) takes another walk on the wild side with this no-holds-barred comedy-drama, which won the Palme d'Or at this year's Cannes Film Festival. Anora (Mikey Madison), or Ani as she prefers to be called, is a Brooklyn lap dancer who gets embroiled with Ivan (Mark Eydelshteyn), the brattish son of an oligarch who's partying like there's no tomorrow before he has to return to Russia.

Ivan hires Ani to be his 'girlfriend' for the week; they get on famously and he proposes, albeit partly so he can stay in the States. Hopping over to Vegas, the pair get married, but as soon as Ivan's parents find out, trouble erupts. Enter Ivan's dad's fixer Toros (Karren Karagulian) and two goons, Igor (Yura Borisov) and Garnik (Vache Tovmasyan), who try to force the spirited Ani into an annulment.

Despite an increasingly manic second act, Baker controls the narrative with real aplomb, crafting a time-bomb mix of physical comedy and high drama. Better still, the final third alights on real pathos: with Ani left to fight her corner alone, Baker delivers a sly commentary on the self-entitlement of the rich and powerful. Principally driven by the electric Madison (*Once Upon a Time... in Hollywood*), *Anora* is a robust look at the haves and have-nots and the gulf in between. **JAMES MOTTRAM**

THE VERDICT Funny, sharp, involving and featuring high-decibel performances, this is another hugely enjoyable ride from writer/director Sean Baker.

TIMESTALKER TBC

Alice Lowe's eras tour...

★★★★★ **OUT 11 OCTOBER** CINEMAS

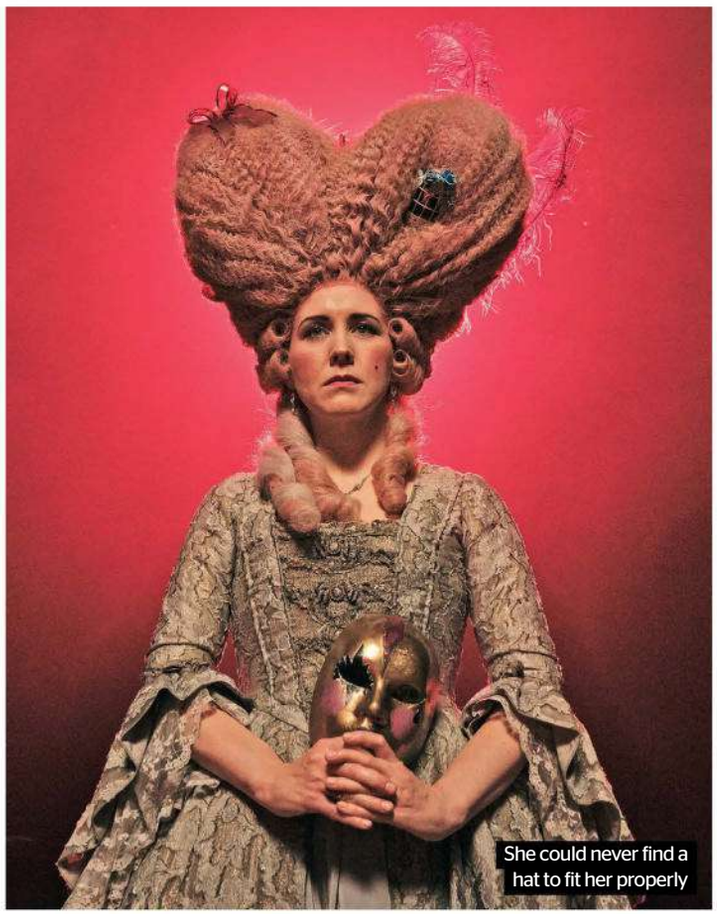
Writer/director/star Alice Lowe follows 2016's *Prevenge* with another bold, challenging and pleasingly bonkers comedy. This one's a 'reincarnation romcom' in which her character Agnes repeatedly falls for the same bloke, Alex (Aneurin Barnard), over the centuries. The kicker is that he's uninterested in her, but she won't take no for an answer, whether it's Victorian England or 80s New York.

Nick Frost is George, an abusive husband in one era, a stalker in another. Jacob Anderson's Scipio is a servant, a pop star's manager and more. Tanya Reynolds plays Meg, the most sympathetic recurring character, who's in love with her deluded friend Agnes.

Timestalker has something to say about romantic obsession: like a teenager, Agnes is slow to learn from her mistake of idolising an unsuitable pretty boy. It's also a neat switch on gender norms in Hollywood comedies past, to which Lowe has fun paying tribute: the 80s will be familiar to fans of everything from *Working Girl* to *Back to the Future*.

But there is nothing Hollywood about *Timestalker*, filmed in Wales, full of British talent and peppered with Lowe's bawdy humour. While not all of the jokes will land universally, some of the sharpest refer to Agnes' sex drive, whether in reference to Victorian dildos or to a put-down that's hopefully firmly consigned to history: 'Keep your knickers on!' **ANNA SMITH**

THE VERDICT A deliciously offbeat paranormal comedy that invites repeat viewings. The more you come back to it, the more detail you'll spot.


She could never find a hat to fit her properly

UNIVERSAL, VERTIGO, BEYOND VISIBLE, MUSICFILMNETWORK, MUBI, DOGWOOF, NAT GEO FILMS, SKY

HAUNTED ULSTER LIVE TBC

★★☆☆☆ **OUT 14 OCTOBER** DIGITAL

Purporting to be a live TV broadcast from Halloween 1998, this places two presenters (Mark Claney, Aimee Richardson) in the home of an Ulster family apparently plagued by paranormal activities. What's to blame: superstition or the supernatural? Paranoia or prank? Dominic O'Neill's micro-movie is a spirited if unscary affair. If it looks cheap, it does a decent job of capturing naff local TV in the 90s. More problematic is how far short it falls of both 1992 mockumentary *Ghostwatch* (a key influence) and this year's ace haunted-broadcast movie *Late Night with the Devil*. **JAMIE GRAHAM**

THE RUBBER-KEYED WONDER TBC

★★★★☆ **OUT 18 OCTOBER** CINEMAS

First available in the UK in 1982, the Sinclair ZX Spectrum brought home-computing to the masses for the first time. Sir Clive Sinclair's revolutionary machine is lovingly deconstructed by documentary-maker Anthony Caulfield, who rigorously examines its creation, success and legacy. Original designers and developers offer insights into the Spectrum's rise to low-cost prominence, while celebrity aficionados reminisce about early gaming experiences. A film that's endearingly niche, but accessible enough to appeal to more than just 80s nostalgists. **JOEL HARLEY**

DAHOMEY PG

★★★★☆ **OUT 25 OCTOBER** CINEMAS

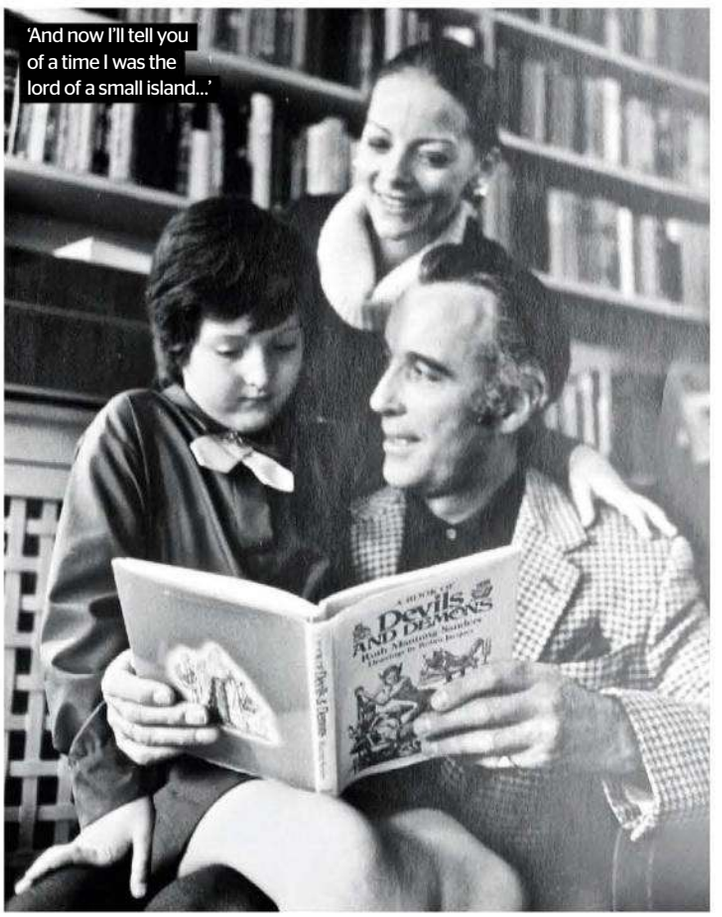
Director Mati Diop's (*Atlantics*) watchful, lyrical documentary literally gives a voice to the Royal Treasures of Dahomey, imagining the troubled thoughts of the fierce animal-headed statues as we follow their return from a century of looted exile in France to a joyous homecoming reception in Benin. However, their restitution sets off an impassioned discussion between local students about the political heritage of these ancestral voodoo figures. Diop's camera, darting between the towering treasures and the fizzing debate, expertly reveals the treasures' controversial place in African history. **KATE STABLES**

ENDURANCE TBC

★★★☆☆ **OUT 14 OCTOBER** CINEMAS
TBC NOVEMBER DISNEY+

Free Solo directors Elizabeth Chai Vasarhelyi and Jimmy Chin, alongside fellow filmmaker Natalie Hewit, follow in the footsteps of Sir Ernest Shackleton for this solid rather than spectacular doc. It recounts how the fabled explorer kept 27 crew alive for more than a year after their vessel *Endurance* sank in the Weddell Sea in 1915.

The directors join a 2022 expedition to find the wreck – but the real chills come from the concurrent retelling of Shackleton's story, which smartly uses AI tech to allow crew members to 'read' aloud diary entries over vintage footage. **JAMES MOTTRAM**



THE LIFE AND DEATHS OF CHRISTOPHER LEE TBC

The man with the golden touch...

★★★★☆ **OUT 24 OCTOBER** SKY ARTS

Former Nazi hunter, Charlemagne descendant, definitive Dracula and all-around screen legend Christopher Lee is lovingly profiled in this biographical doc.

Employing an innovative blend of traditional and experimental animation styles alongside the expected talking heads and archive interviews, director Jon Spira (*Star Wars* doc *Elstree 1976*) recounts Lee's journey in what he imagines to be the late actor's own words. With Peter Serafinowicz delivering a booming vocal impression of Lee, the mighty thespian is brought back to life in marionette form to narrate a whistlestop tour of his life… and many cinematic deaths. The star would probably appreciate how much the film glosses over his Hammer work (1958's *Dracula*, et al), capturing the sense of frustration he felt at being typecast. In one of the most striking moments, an old interview captures Lee's offence at being described as 'the King of Horror' by an unwitting reporter.

A portrait of a surprisingly sensitive star emerges, one hounded by imposter syndrome throughout his long and storied life. Interviewees Peter Jackson, Harriet Walter and Joe Dante are among those who pay tribute, sharing fond insights into the mindset of an often-conflicted man. Elsewhere the tone is light-hearted, irreverent even; it all adds up to a celebration of a bona-fide big-screen icon. Just don't call him the King of Horror… **JOEL HARLEY**

THE VERDICT A cheering exploration of the life and accomplishments of one of cinema's most fascinating figures.

Tony Hale and Anna Kendrick make a date with danger

WOMAN OF THE HOUR 15

Date fright...

★★★★★ **OUT 18 OCTOBER** NETFLIX

Did you hear the one about the serial killer who appeared on a 70s TV dating show? It sounds like the set-up for a grim joke – but Anna Kendrick's impressive directorial debut (in which she also stars) is in fact based on a true story. While there's humour in the film, it's no laughing matter overall. This is an acutely observed, well-judged and original take on a popular genre.

The stranger-than-fiction story splices two strands: the episode of the show that the killer, Rodney Alcala, appears on is the centrepiece, intercut with (upsetting, but not overly graphic) depictions of his despicable crimes.

Meanwhile, Kendrick plays Sheryl Bradshaw, an aspiring actor whose agent hooks her up with a reluctant appearance on *The Dating Game* (the US version of *Blind Date*). From the kitschy production design to Tony Hale's slimy host (he's no Cilla), there are flashes of fun, but also an ever-present undercurrent of tension. As Rodney, Daniel Zovatto is an unnerving presence; clearly able to turn on the charm, but never far from dropping the mask and revealing the predator underneath.

It's best to go in with limited info about the real-life circumstances behind the film (save your Wikipedia-scouring for afterwards). Snappily edited, it zips along at a brisk 95 mins, not needing any longer to make its points and leave a lasting impact. **MATT MAYTUM**

THE VERDICT Anna Kendrick's assured directorial debut is highly recommended... but, of course, the choice is yours.

SOUND OF HOPE: THE STORY OF POSSUM TROT 12A

★★☆☆☆ **OUT 11 OCTOBER** CINEMAS

Hope sounds like syrupy strings if this true-story melodrama from Angel Studios (*Sound of Freedom*) is any indication. In Texas in 1996, the Lord tells Donna (Nika King) to adopt troubled children. Her reverend husband (Demetrius Grosse) eventually concurs, but can they handle traumatised teen Terri (Diaana Babnicova)? Writer/director Joshua Weigel doesn't ignore their struggles, but his tale drags over two hours-plus of foregone conclusions: even if you can't fault the sincerity, the sappy score and message that 'love forgives' land crudely. **KEVIN HARLEY**

NEVER LET GO 15

★★★★★ **OUT NOW** CINEMAS

Halle Berry is Momma, a single parent who keeps her two young sons in check with petrifying stories about a soul-sucking entity that's taken over the world beyond their isolated cabin home. But could the grisly scares in this psycho-thriller-slash-fairy-tale actually be figments of her imagination? Berry immerses herself in the role, but it's young actors Anthony B. Jenkins and Percy Daggs IV who shine brightest in Alexandre Aja's (*Crawl*) film, a study of fear and paranoia whose iron-hold on the attention can withstand the odd dip into implausibility. **NEIL SMITH**

FALLING INTO PLACE TBC

★★★☆☆ **OUT 11 OCTOBER** CINEMAS

German actor Aylin Tezel makes a promising directorial debut with this drama set initially on the Isle of Skye, where two 30-something visitors from London – set designer Kira (Tezel herself) and musician Ian (Chris Fulton) – meet in a pub and establish a connection before returning to their separate lives. Maintaining an effective visual contrast between island and city, this well-acted modern romance intriguingly keeps its leads apart for much of its running time, exploring how both are held back by repeated patterns of behaviour. Modest but disarming. **TOM DAWSON**

TERRIFIER 3 18

★★★★★ **OUT 11 OCTOBER** CINEMAS

The budget is bigger for the third film in the serial-killer saga, but the grindhouse vibe remains the same, as the resurrected (again!) Art the Clown (David Howard Thornton) returns just in time for Christmas. Writer/director/creator Damien Leone makes the most of the bleak midwinter setting, while adding more mythology to the mix allows for torture survivor Victoria (Samantha Scaffidi) to enjoy a far bigger, *Bride of Frankenstein*-style role. The gleeful nastiness will be too much for some, but fans will rejoice as Art wraps intestines round a Christmas tree like tinsel. **JAMIE GRAHAM**

LEAH GALLO/NETFLIX. KOVA/ANGEL. 606 DISTRIBUTION. SIGNATURE. MARGOT FILMS. J6 FILMS. ALTITUDE. DAZZLER MEDIA. MODERN FILMS. LIONSGATE

HARDER THAN THE ROCK 12A

★★★★★ **OUT NOW** CINEMAS

Founded by Jamaican immigrants in a London bus shelter, Cimarons laid the foundations for the reggae scene in 70s Britain. The origin-story portion of Mark Warmington's documentary captures the sense of musical revolution the band inspired; in the present, the director catches up with the surviving members as they stage a final performance in the wake of drummer Maurice Ellis' death. Featuring epochal tunes and recollections that are nothing short of rhapsodical, it's a vibrant, poignant tribute to Cimarons' legacy and influence. **JOEL HARLEY**

THE MOUSE TRAP 15

★★★★★ **OUT NOW** DIGITAL
14 OCTOBER DVD

Following *Winnie-the-Pooh: Blood and Honey*'s dubious lead, Jamie Bailey's Canadian horror turns 1928's *Steamboat Willie* – now in the public domain – into a cut-price slasher featuring a killer in a Mickey Mouse mask. After an error-filled opening crawl distancing the film from Disney, and a pointless wraparound section, the action finally begins, with Mickey (writer/producer Simon Phillips) menacing amusement arcade worker Alex (Sophie McIntosh) and her pals at an after-hours party. Unfunny and gore-light, it's desperate stuff, making *Blood and Honey* look like *Halloween*. **MATT GLASBY**

REBELLIOUS PG

★★★★★ **OUT 25 OCTOBER**
CINEMAS

'I kneel to no one, you pathetic excuse for a sorcerer!' snaps defiant princess Mina (Alyson Leigh Rosenfeld) at the wizard (Pete Zarustica) who's spirited her away to his remote phantom castle. Alas, this animated fairy tale is itself decidedly inferior, riddled as it is with shameless lifts from *Beauty and the Beast*, *Frozen* and other Disney faves. Mina is determined to buck royal tradition and choose her own hubby; if only Alex Tsitsilin's 'toon showed some of the same pluck, instead of falling back on a stock array of giants, dragons and deadly dungeons. **NEIL SMITH**

SOUNDTRACK TO A COUP D'ETAT TBC

★★★★★ **OUT 15 NOVEMBER**
CINEMAS

Meticulously researched, Johan Grimonprez's rigorous doc unpicks events following the forming of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 1960. He shows how, as Western powers sought to disrupt Congolese independence, the US used a Louis Armstrong tour to cover the murder of Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba. Splicing archive materials, literary quotes and more, *Soundtrack* can seem intimidating. But as politics and protest merge, Grimonprez uses jazz rhythms and tight editing to lend his dispatch from Cold War-era history a sense of immediacy. **KEVIN HARLEY**

Cillian Murphy and Zara Devlin star in a dark, understated tale

SMALL THINGS LIKE THESE 12A

Murphy's raw...

★★★★★ **OUT 1 NOVEMBER** CINEMAS

Adapted from the prize-winning 2021 book by Claire Keegan, this subtle Irish drama is about the so-called 'Magdalene Laundries', the mainly Catholic Church-run institutions where 'fallen women' were housed and exploited. While the shameful practice was previously fully explored in Peter Mullan's acclaimed, inmate-focused *The Magdalene Sisters* (2002), Tim Mielants' (2019's *Patrick*) 80s-set drama explores it from an outsider's perspective.

Living in New Ross, County Wexford, with wife Eileen (Eileen Walsh), 'soft-hearted' father of five Bill (Cillian Murphy) is an introspective coal merchant whose past traumas resurface when he delivers to a convent where he discovers a young, dishevelled girl cowering in a coal shed.

Scripted by playwright Enda Walsh (who co-wrote Steve McQueen's *Hunger*, 2008), this is a film where much is left unsaid. Bill's pain is evoked in small, telling ways - take the shots of him scrubbing his hands of coal dust, as if washing away his perceived sins. Murphy's thoughtful turn is but one of several excellent performances; notably, Emily Watson is on imperious form as the convent's Mother Superior, who has clearly terrified residents these past years. Mielants, who brilliantly conjures a dank, oppressive mood (even a shot of *Danger Mouse* on TV fails to lift the spirits), avoids any overwrought confrontations; the film's understated power only grows as it goes on. **JAMES MOTTRAM**

THE VERDICT Cillian Murphy again shows that less really is more in this expertly-crafted minimalist drama.

It's always horrid when you wake up with the sheet over your face

SALEM'S LOT 15

Back from the dead...

★★★★★ **OUT 11 OCTOBER** CINEMAS

Delayed for more than two years, Gary Dauberman's adaptation of Stephen King's 1975 sophomore novel finally sees the sun. But unlike a vampire it doesn't, thankfully, burst into flames and perish.

Maine, the 1970s: returning to his childhood town of Jerusalem's Lot, author Ben Mears (Lewis Pullman) learns that the spooky Marsten House has been bought by the mysterious Kurt Barlow (Alexander Ward) and his helper, Richard Straker (Pilou Asbæk). Soon the local residents are turning into creatures of the night, and Mears finds himself leading a ragtag band of locals (Bill Camp, Alfre Woodard, Makenzie Leigh) in a high-stakes (ahem) operation.

As Dauberman proved in writing *It* (2017/19), he has a deep affection for King's work. So while this movie is necessarily pruned of characters and subplots (there's good reason that King's dense novel has twice before been turned into a miniseries), it does retain the author's feel for small-town America. And while no single scare can match the kid tapping at the window in Tobe Hooper's 1979 series, Dauberman does come up with a handful of unnerving images and a couple of neat twists on vampire lore.

Is *Salem's Lot* a top-tier King adaptation? No. But not for nothing is a drive-in theatre a key location in the action – this is exactly the kind of fun midnight movie that teens flocked to in the 70s. **JAMIE GRAHAM**

THE VERDICT Don't be put off by the long wait. This is somewhat slimline but a lot of creepy fun.

MAYA AND THE WAVE TBC

★★★★★ **OUT NOW** CINEMAS

An absorbing portrait of Maya Gabeira, a Brazilian big-wave surfer who has battled sexist attitudes to become a world champion in her hitherto male-dominated sport. Shot over a decade, Stephanie Johnes' doc incorporates interviews with Gabeira's family, friends and colleagues, alongside remarkable footage of her attempts to break surfing records in Portugal. It's a study of determination, focus and obsession in the face of mortal danger, in which Gabeira openly admits that her fear of riding such mammoth waves is what makes the challenge so exhilarating. **TOM DAWSON**

HEAD SOUTH TBC

★★★★★ **OUT 18 OCTOBER** CINEMAS

Charming if somewhat featherlight, this coming-of-ager centres on Angus (Ed Oxenbould, *The Visit*), a small-town schoolkid with big dreams in 1970s New Zealand. Inspired by his over-in-London brother, who sends him cool vinyl, Angus kickstarts his musical life, forming punk band the Daleks. There's girl trouble (via Roxie Mohebbi's aloof Holly) and parent trouble (Marton Csokas as Dad) and a vibe of nostalgia for a simpler time crafted by writer/director Jonathan Ogilvie. Even if some scenes flounder, the music consistently rocks; you may well feel an urge to start your own band. **JAMES MOTTRAM**

SINCE YESTERDAY: THE UNTOLD STORY OF SCOTLAND'S GIRL BANDS TBC

★★★★★ **OUT 18 OCTOBER** CINEMAS

The majority of the groups in this incisive documentary will be largely unknown to those who see it – and that's part of the point. As well as providing a whirlwind tour through six decades of trailblazing music-making, Blair Young and Carla J. Easton's film acts as a shaming survey of the hurdles and prejudices that prevent girl bands enjoying the success their male counterparts take for granted. The McKinlays, Strawberry Switchblade and Easton's TeenCanteen are among the cult outfits it celebrates. **NEIL SMITH**

CHILDREN OF THE CULT TBC

★★★★★ **OUT NOW** CINEMAS

Aiming to 'uncover the truth that [Netflix series] *Wild Wild Country* failed to tell', Maroesja Perizonius' powerful doc reveals the 70s/80s systemic sexual abuse of children who lived in international communes following the teachings of guru Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. A child of the communes herself, Perizonius travels to the UK, US and Switzerland, interviewing fellow female survivors who testify to the assaults inflicted by adult cult members under the guise of 'free love'. Male perpetrators are tracked down but express no real remorse in a film both dauntless and distressing. **TOM DAWSON**

WARNER, MUSICFILMNETWORK, TULL STORIES, DARTMOUTH FILMS, COSMIC CAT

GLADIATOR 15

Ring of power...

2000 ★★★★★ **OUT 11 OCTOBER** CINEMAS

Since its release, Ridley Scott's revivalist sword-and-sandals epic has echoed throughout film and telly. *Game of Thrones* reflected its taste for violence and politics, while Oliver Reed's tipsy ex-gladiator – 'Win the crowd!' – lived on in *The Hunger Games*' Haymitch. And while *Dune: Part Two*'s Giedi Prime revived the Colosseum, Joaquin Phoenix's villain Commodus perhaps pre-empted Heath Ledger's Joker with his rants about scheming senators.

Such is the strength of peak-form Scott. *Gladiator* is a thinking viewer's crowd-pleaser, capable of mobilising stars, setting, soul and subtexts within the close-fitting armour of a thumping good story. Carved from myth, that core tale is knowingly summarised on screen: a soldier-turned-slave becomes a gladiator who defies an emperor... As Maximus, Russell Crowe's magnetically measured machismo adds the anchor for the script's shifting currents of betrayal and revenge, while Hans Zimmer's Holst-ian score maxes the bombast and elegiac grandeur.

Revisited, this classicist potency grips even if the CGI dates. Yet even here, the nagging sense of fakery fits the film's play on Rome-as-metaphor, where public image is a gloss for cruelty and decadence. While the violence embodies these contradictions with queasily thrilling force, Scott's implied allegory for American corruption still seems pertinent, too. As Commodus rigs the action, he's practically a proto-Trump, craven in his longing for adoration and manipulation of spectacle. **KEVIN HARLEY**

THE VERDICT Between its muscular brutality and sly meta-meanings, Scott's classic remains bracingly canny entertainment.

Go on, say it with us: 'My name is Maximus Decimus Meridius...'

'Cooee!'

UNIVERSAL, WARNER

A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 15

Glove-struck teenagers...

1984 ★★★★½ **OUT 25 OCTOBER** CINEMAS

Back in cinemas for its 40th birthday, Wes Craven's slasher has had its certificate lowered from an 18 to a 15, with the BBFC highlighting the movie's fantasy context and its relative tameness compared to the violence of such modern-day horror films as the new Halloweens, *Thanksgiving* and *Saw X*.

But none of those films *scare* like the OG Elm Street. Inspired by newspaper articles about a group of students dying in their sleep, Craven jolted the tired teen-slasher subgenre back to screaming wakefulness by blurring the lines between reality and fantasy, as a group of matchstick-eyed teens (including Amanda Wyss' inaugural victim Tina) fall prey to razor-fingered dream demon Fred Krueger (Robert Englund).

Viewed now, shadow-cloaked Freddy (the effects budget was only $57,000) still slices deep, while Johnny Depp, making his debut, sports a terrifying 80s combo of crop-top and joggers. Heather Langenkamp, as final girl Nancy, possesses an innate likeability that saw her beat out Demi Moore and Courteney Cox to the role. (The latter's moment in a Craven-directed revival of the slasher movie would come 12 years later.)

There followed six sequels, a tame TV series, a crossover with the *Friday the 13th* franchise and a godawful 2010 reboot. Freddy was granted increasing amounts of lighting, FX and quotable quips, but it's this red-in-tooth-and-claw original that casts the longest shadow. **JAMIE GRAHAM**

THE VERDICT Now rated 15 but still scary, with Tina's splashy death remaining one of horror cinema's great kills.

Don't have nightmares...

WATERSHIP DOWN PG

Bunny business...

1978 ★★★★★ **OUT 25 OCTOBER** CINEMAS
11 NOVEMBER 4K UHD, BD
EXTRAS ★★★★★ Featurettes, Shorts, Gallery, Poster, Postcards, Book

Two years on from having its original U certificate upgraded to a PG, Martin Rosen's adap of Richard Adams' novel returns to cinemas in a new 4K restoration to harrow and traumatise a fresh generation of unsuspecting viewers.

Almost half a century has passed since this story of plucky rabbits seeking a utopia first hit the screen. Yet its hard-hitting images of bunnies being suffocated, snared and mutilated have lost little of their intensity in the interim. That most of its voice actors have now gone to the great hutch in the sky, meanwhile, lends a plaintive layer of poignancy to a film whose protagonists are never far away from 'The Black Rabbit of Death'.

What comes across most strikingly, though, is how artistically ambitious *Watership Down* was for its time. British cinema was in the doldrums for much of the 1970s, while British animation had become a TV concern. For such a visually sublime and narratively daring project to flower in that environment was therefore almost miraculous, and all the more for retaining so defiantly its distinctively homegrown character. Four years later, Rosen's Nepenthe Productions tried and failed to repeat the magic in 1982's *The Plague Dogs*. Which surely begs the question: how can the light that burned so brightly suddenly burn so pale? **NEIL SMITH**

THE VERDICT An animated landmark gets a 24-carrot makeover that's well worth hopping to the pictures for.

CAGE OF GOLD PG

1950 ★★★★★
OUT NOW DVD, BD, DIGITAL
EXTRAS ★★★★★ Featurette, Gallery

Not one of Ealing Studios' best, Basil Dearden's (*Victim*, *The Blue Lamp*) middling hybrid crime film/romantic melodrama stars Jean Simmons as a young woman who leaves her dependable fiancé (James Donald) for a seductive former flame (David Farrar), only for him to eventually abandon her with a bun in the oven. While Farrar gives a memorably caddish turn as an amoral user of women, the rest of the film is pretty unexceptional – which is perhaps why the sole extra of real note focuses its attention on Simmons' stylish outfits. **ANTON VAN BEEK**

THE FALL 15

2006 ★★★★★ **OUT NOW** MUBI

Accused of style over substance for *The Cell* (2000), Tarsem Singh maxed all extremes for his follow-up, a fever-dream fable of innocence and experience. Imagine *The Fall Guy*'s arthouse flipside and you'll be close to this (4K restored) tale of a hospitalised, depressed stuntman (Lee Pace) telling magical stories to a young girl (Catinca Untaru) – with stings in the tales. Navigating reality/fantasy, Singh coats these yarns in lavish stylings that can be gaudily overbaked. But you can't fault his ambition, much less his leads' commitment: notably, Untaru wrings the emotions dry. **KEVIN HARLEY**

NIKITA 15

1990 ★★★★★ **OUT NOW** 4K UHD
EXTRAS ★★★★★ Making of, Featurettes

Oft-copied (even by the director himself) but never bettered, Luc Besson's breakout hit about a teenage felon transformed into a government assassin has now been treated to a killer 4K upgrade. The breathtaking restoration not only looks sharper than an executioner's blade, but also brings out the best in the richly saturated colour palette. Extras include a bonus Blu-ray platter housing new interviews with leading lady Anne Parillaud, restoration supervisor André Labbouz and others – although Besson only appears in the set's vintage features. **ANTON VAN BEEK**

CARRIE 15

1976 ★★★★★
OUT 18 OCTOBER CINEMAS

No one's gonna laugh at you now... Back in cinemas in all its gory glory (thanks to a 4K restoration), this tale of telekinetic teen Cassie – sorry, Carrie (Sissy Spacek, luminously heartbreaking) – exacting spectacular revenge after being drenched in pig's blood at the prom is still a flooring experience, emotionally and technically. Stephen King received just $2,500 for the rights to his debut novel, but a box office of $33m from a $1.8m budget helped turbo-charge his career. More than 50 King movies later, Brian De Palma's adap remains high in the pantheon. **JAMIE GRAHAM**

BFI, STUDIOCANAL, MUBI, MGM, PARK CIRCUS, FALCON INTERNATIONAL, SECOND SIGHT, CRITERION, SPIRIT

HALLOWEEN 15

1978 ★★★★★

OUT 25 OCTOBER CINEMAS

Pumpkins at the ready: John Carpenter's seminal slasher is back on the big screen. Forget all the sequels, remakes and reboots – this is the only one that truly matters, as babysitter Laurie Strode (Jamie Lee Curtis) is terrorised by knife-wielding sanitarium escapee Michael Myers (Nick Castle). Donald Pleasence brings gravitas to the role of the psychiatrist hunting Myers down, but it's Carpenter's razor-sharp direction and unforgettable score, together with Curtis' stunning Scream Queen masterclass, that makes this a stone-cold horror classic. **JAMES MOTTRAM**

THE HITCHER 15

1986 ★★★★★ **OUT NOW** 4K UHD, BD

EXTRAS ★★★★★ Commentaries, Shorts, Podcast, Featurettes, Books, Art cards

An elemental Rutger Hauer is at his most terrifying as the titular hiker – a cross between the Terminator and Bruce the shark, wrapped up in a supremely cool trench coat. Caught in his path, young Jim Halsey (C. Thomas Howell) barely stands a chance, up against an unknowable tormentor who's only in it for the thrill of the chase. Robert Harmon directs from Eric Red's screenplay, amping up the explosive action and tense interplay between the leads. Restored in 4K, its intimidating desert vistas shimmer with menace. **JOEL HARLEY**

IKIRU PG

1952 ★★★★★ **OUT NOW** BD

EXTRAS ★★★★★ Commentary, Documentaries, Intro, Short, Gallery

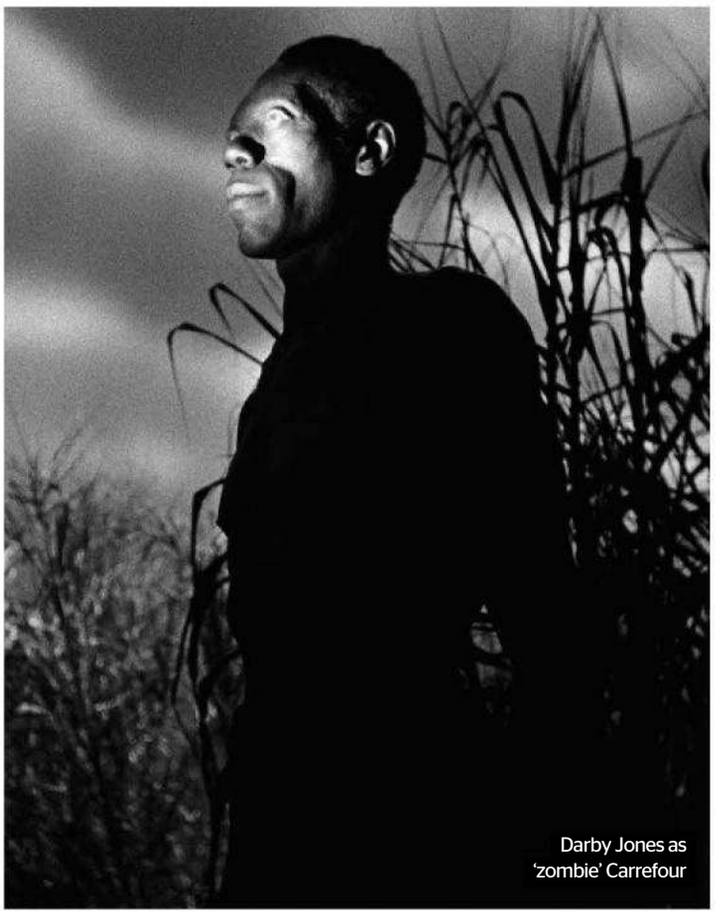
Although he's best known for his samurai stunners, Akira Kurosawa's arguable masterpiece is this achingly humanist drama about a lowly, middle-aged public servant (Takashi Shimura, sublime) who, upon learning that he has terminal cancer, goes searching for some sort of meaning to his life. Deeply moving, but never overly sentimental, Kurosawa's existential study of mortality (reimagined as 2022's *Living*, with Bill Nighy) also offers a trenchant critique of needlessly inefficient bureaucracy that – sadly – feels more relevant than ever today. **ANTON VAN BEEK**

NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD 15

1968 ★★★★★ **OUT NOW** 4K UHD

EXTRAS ★★★★★ Commentaries, Work-print edit, Featurettes, Dailies, Newsreel, Essay

Flesh-eating ghouls besiege ragtag survivors holed up in a farmhouse in George A. Romero's devastating debut, given new, um, life by Criterion's 4K restoration. This DIY movie invented the zombie subgenre as we now know it and modernised horror by feeding off the turmoil of the time (Civil Rights riots, the Vietnam War), as America ate itself. Duane Jones' Ben is a Black hero in a film that doesn't make an issue of it, and the nihilistic ending still shatters. **JAMIE GRAHAM**



Darby Jones as 'zombie' Carrefour

I WALKED WITH A ZOMBIE/ THE SEVENTH VICTIM 12

Val-ue for money...

1943 ★★★★★/★★★★★ **OUT 14 OCTOBER** 4K UHD, BD

EXTRAS ★★★★★ Commentaries, Documentary, Featurette, Essays

Ailing after the financial flops of Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* and *The Magnificent Ambersons*, RKO shipped in David O. Selznick's story editor Val Lewton to head up a unit dedicated to horror B-movies. RKO foisted tacky titles upon him (*Cat People*, *The Leopard Man*, etc), but what they got back were sophisticated pictures built on shadows, suggestion and psychosexual tension.

Directed by Jacques Tourneur, *I Walked with a Zombie* transposes *Jane Eyre* to the tropics. A young nurse (Frances Dee) caring for a comatose woman on a Caribbean island falls for her husband (Tom Conway) as voodoo drums throb, sugarcane sways in moonlight and the dead walk. Mark Robson's *The Seventh Victim* centres on another journeying young woman, Mary (Kim Hunter), whose search for her missing sister unveils a Satanic cult in New York. Lewton once said that his key theme is 'death is good'; the alternatives on offer in these two movies – slavery, depression, repressed and oppressed sexuality – hardly suggest otherwise.

This shimmering 4K Criterion disc accentuates the high-contrast black-and-white photography that so distinguished Lewton's movies. Best of the extras are imports from previous editions: 53-minute doc *Shadows in the Dark: The Val Lewton Legacy*, and a *Zombie* chat-track by authors Kim Newman and Stephen Jones. **JAMIE GRAHAM**

THE VERDICT Joe Dante says Val Lewton's no-budget horror movies are 'art'. No arguments here.

TECH ROUND-UP

Home-cinema kit to make a noise about...

Last month, the annual Berlin-based IFA tech show celebrated its centenary – and there was plenty of new kit on display to mark the occasion. This year, the brands went big on home-cinema audio; could this be the end of mumbled dialogue on your telly?

CAMBRIDGE AUDIO EVO ONE

£1,299 OUT NOW

This ultra-stylish all-in-one wireless speaker from the British audio expert packs an HDMI port that can be used to boost the sound of your TV. Tuned by the same team behind the firm's award-winning hi-fi equipment, the Evo One sports 14 speakers surrounding the front, side and rear, along with a chic real-walnut veneer. You can also stream music from the likes of Spotify, Tidal and Qobuz, while a cool little 6.8in colour screen can display a clock, album artwork or virtual sound meters.

BANG & OLUFSEN BEOPLAY H100

£1,299 OUT NOW

These cans are ideal for watching films on the go, thanks to their earpad cushions covered in lambskin leather and detachable inner headband. They're designed for high-quality audio, including support for Dolby Atmos spatial audio. You'll get up to 32 hours of playback from a full charge – and if you need a quick top-up, you can nab five hours of extra battery life with just five minutes of charging. They come in three highly Instagrammable colours: Sunset Apricot, Hourglass Sand and good old Infinite Black.

DTS CLEAR DIALOGUE

£TBC OUT TBC

This incredibly welcome new tech is designed to boost hard-to-hear scenes on your TV. Using AI, it identifies and boosts spoken dialogue in audio streams to banish mumbled speech and background noise. And the good news is that it'll work across different languages and content, so it should fix the audio on most things you watch via the small screen. There's no launch date just yet, but you can expect this to start landing on big-name TVs in the not-too-distant future.

KANTO AUDIO REN

£599 OUT 1 NOV

These slick speakers from the Canadian audio firm feature an HDMI connection, so you can hook them up to your TV for high-quality sound. The Vocal Boost mode is designed to make on-screen dialogue easier to hear, while the Night Mode takes loud sound effects down a notch, so you won't disturb everyone else in the house (or street) with your late-night movie marathons. And of course, you can also connect them to your audio source of choice to double up as a music system.

SAMSUNG PREMIERE 9 £5,999 OUT NOW

Short on space but want the big-screen experience at home? Then check out this ultra-short-throw 4K projector, which can plant a screen size up to 130in wide on your wall. Sporting an unusual minimalist design – round edges and 'warm white' finish – the projector automatically adjusts brightness and contrast depending on the lighting, so you'll get vibrant colours, even in a bright room. Built-in AI upscales your content, no matter what the original resolution is, while up-firing speakers support Dolby Atmos immersive audio.

LIBBY PLUMMER

KANTO AUDIO, DTS, CAMBRIDGE AUDIO, BANG & OLUFSEN, SAMSUNG

The majestic T-rex, star of both *Jurassic Park* and *Walking with Dinosaurs*

BBC/ALAMY

CLASSIC TV
WALKING WITH DINOSAURS

Boom boom, acka lacka lacka boom...

1999 AVAILABLE ON DVD, DIGITAL

***Jurassic Park* changed everything. Although audiences had enjoyed representations of dinos ever since animator Winsor McCay's Gertie first frolicked across screens in 1914, it wasn't until Steven Spielberg's 1993 blockbuster – and the groundbreaking visual effects used to bring its prehistoric stars to life – that we really felt we were seeing living, breathing dinosaurs for the first time.**

The film's success brought about renewed fascination with dinosaurs. So when, in the mid 1990s, producer Tim Haines persuaded the BBC to make a landmark natural-history series about dinosaurs, there was one key concern: how to create the creatures on a TV budget that would live up to expectations generated by *Jurassic Park*?

For the answer, Haines approached Mike Milne (who passed away in June this year), founder of Framestore's award-winning computer-animation department. Milne initially said it couldn't be done. But after spending the night worrying 'What if someone else says yes and succeeds and I'll be the person who turned it down?', he changed his mind. With Framestore on board, Haines created a proof-of-concept video that not only showed BBC bigwigs what was possible, but also convinced the Discovery Channel to co-finance the £6 million production.

Haines' gambit paid off. The opening episode pulled in an unimaginable 18.91 million UK viewers – beating the usually unassailable soap operas – and the following five instalments never dipped below 15.69 million. In the process it birthed a new era of TV, its offspring including subsequent Walking with… shows and other VFX-driven factual programmes such as *Colosseum* (2003) and *Supervolcano* (2005).

Despite the praise it received from awestruck audiences and (most) critics, *Walking with Dinosaurs* still faced a backlash from some quarters of the scientific community. Part of this was down to simple mistakes (such as episode three's ludicrously oversized liopleurodon) and the evolving nature of scientific understanding. Others, however, distrusted the way the series mixed scientific fact with pure speculation - without addressing which was which.

For Haines and others, though, this was missing the point. For them, the true purpose of *Walking with Dinosaurs* was to transport viewers to a prehistoric world and get them enthused about the incredible creatures that once roamed our planet. In that regard, it succeeded. And besides, as contributing palaeontologist Professor Michael Benton stated, 'Science is about hypothesis-testing. And a hypothesis *is* speculation.' **ANTON VAN BEEK**

A VERY SPECIAL EPISODE

TIME OF THE TITANS

Having focused more on the prehistoric reptiles of the Triassic period than actual dinosaurs in its first part, this second episode's jump to the late Jurassic definitely delivers on the show's title. Unforgettable highlights include a thrilling showdown between a stegosaurus and a pair of allosaurus, and a look at the precarious nature of sauropod sex.

FRESH SPINS

Songs for bio-exorcists and Belfast...

BEETLEJUICE BEETLEJUICE

★★★★★

The Banana Boat Song is joined by the frankly bananas *MacArthur Park* for this cheeringly scattershot soundtrack collection. If indie-rock singer Tess Parks, falsetto faves the Bee Gees and neo-prog dreamboats Sigur Rós have anything in common, Tim Burton isn't telling – but here they all share afterlife space, alongside Pino Donaggio's gorgeous *Carrie* theme, Richard Harris' bizarre *MacArthur* and more. Two dizzily carnivalesque Danny Elfman cues match the wayward mood nicely.

KNEECAP

★★★★★

Dirty basslines propel a well-stocked soundtrack to the Irish hip-hop trio's quasi-biopic. Between dialogue snippets, Kneecap's music ranges deceptively wide, from the house-y *Parful* and grime-y *Its Been Ages* to the pummelling electric beats of *Guilty Conscience* and *H.O.O.D.* Comedown number *Better Way to Live* and Mikey J's flexible score add dynamism, while cuts from Fontaines D.C., Orbital (classic hands-in-the-air rave hosanna *Belfast*) and others complement *Kneecap*'s message and mischief bracingly.

CLASSIC SOUNDTRACK
THE WIZARD OF OZ

HERBERT STOTHART (SCORE), HAROLD ARLEN/YIP HARBURG (SONGS) WATERTOWER MUSIC

Psychedelic playground or children's fantasia? Gnarled fairy tale or Depression-era dream? Whether you shuddered at the Wicked Witch or spent too long pondering Pink Floyd-ian mysteries, you can slice into 1939's L. Frank Baum adaptation in many ways. And the wonder of it is, the multi-faceted mash-up of score with songs mapped out groundbreaking hybrid territory to carry audiences every hop, skip and step of the road.

The heart of the music, of course, is the one that almost got away. MGM mogul Louis B. Mayer didn't want *Over the Rainbow* included, but he relented, wisely. Even if the birds and their tweets recall Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, *Over the Rainbow* scales distinctly rarefied heights. Left-leaning lyricist Yip Harburg knew life's struggles, as did Judy Garland – at a mere 16, her inflection on 'Oh, why' sings volumes. Between the pair's specific experiences, a near-reject became a melting plea of universal yearning.

Elsewhere, Harburg and Harold Arlen whip up tunes like mini-tornadoes of spritz, wit and joy. Heralded by Glinda's tinkly entrance and Dorothy's guilelessly eager rhymes, *Munchkinland Musical Sequence* is enough fun to make you forget those notorious making-of anecdotes. Delicious dashes of drollery accompany the call/response legalese over the witch's death ('Really most sincerely dead') and the summation of what happens when houses crush people: 'not a healthy situation', indeed.

The vaudevillian *If I Only Had a Brain/Heart/the Nerve* equally delights, expertly matched to the actors' movements and sung exuberantly by Ray Bolger, Jack Haley and Bert Lahr. *We're Off to See the Wizard* hot-steps winningly; *Optimistic Voices* is a twinkly wake-up call; *Ding-Dong! The Witch Is Dead* brims with deathly exuberance; and *The Merry Old Land of Oz* adds romping good cheer.

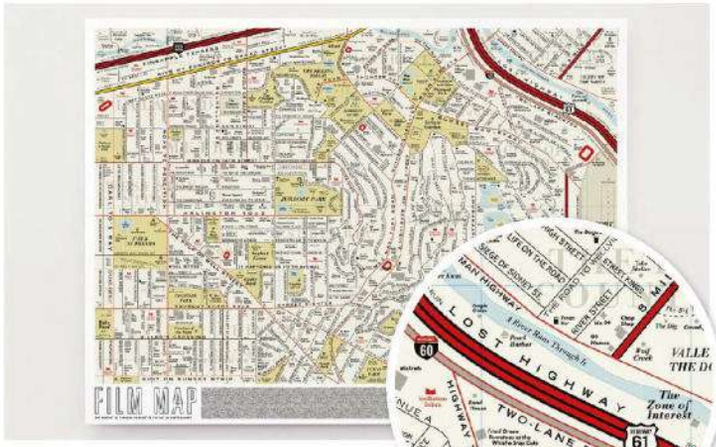
No less miraculously, MGM composer Herbert Stothart followed three Oscar nominations with his finest score. Juggling Toto's spry woodwinds with a malign seven-note Gulch/Wicked Witch (basically, *We're Off to See the Wizard*'s evil twin) theme, an eerie poppies cue, ceremonial fanfares and more, Stothart underscored the film's songs with personality, panache and propulsion. Even now, the whirling cyclone cue practically lifts you from your seat.

The payoff was Oscars for score and song, with guess-what taking the honours. *Over the Rainbow* became an anthem for LGBTQIA+ groups, while covers by acts from the Flaming Lips to Ariana Grande testify to its embracing power and poignancy. Poised between heartache and hope, it's one of many reasons why – 85 years on – we can't really say goodbye to the yellow brick road.

KEVIN HARLEY

WARNER, HEAVENLY RECORDINGS, WATERTOWER MUSIC

EXTRAS



PRINT

FILM MAP

OUT NOW

The landscape of cinema is ever-changing… so it's no surprise that design studio Dorothy's bestselling Film Map has been through multiple iterations. This is number eight, launched to coincide with the 12th anniversary of the original print, which is loosely based on a vintage LA street map and features the titles of more than 900 movies. New additions for '24 include *Asteroid City*, *The Zone of Interest* and *Megalopolis*; get your journey started at wearedorothy.com.

VARIOUS

DISNEY HALLOWEEN COLLECTION

OUT NOW

It's a Mouse House of horrors this month when it comes to Disney merch. The studio's 'scary' brands are to the fore with *Haunted Mansion* (plates, kitchen towels, weighted throw) and *Nightmare Before Christmas* (light-up ornaments, cookie jar) gear on offer. There's a variety of Mickey/Minnie Mouse jack-o'-lantern items, while Stitch gets in on this year's novelty-receptacle trend (sandworm popcorn bucket, et al) with an open-gobbed candy bowl. Get stuck in at disneystore.co.uk.

TOYS/COLLECTIBLES

LEGO WICKED SETS

OUT NOW

What is this feeling? It's that hype levels for *Wicked* are higher than a gravity-defying witch. Lego has conjured up no fewer than four sets for the musical adap, three of them centred on key locations: Emerald City, Shiz University and Glinda and Elphaba's dormitory. The two magical pals become not-so-minifigures in the fourth set which, like the others, comes with a QR code for unlocking additional content (or song-tent, if you will). Thank goodness for lego.com.

COLLECTIBLE

MICHAEL MYERS COUNTDOWN CHARACTER

OUT NOW

Like most of the people he meets, Michael Myers is in pieces: 13 to be exact, contained in the drawers of a collector's box. Put them together one day at a time from 19 October, and by Halloween you'll have a finished figurine of the butcher of Haddonfield (as seen in Rob Zombie's 2007 film). Of course, you can build in one go if you prefer; the pieces click together without leaving any mess in their wake (unlike Mr M.). Chop-chop to numskull.com! **MATTHEW LEYLAND**

DISNEY, DOROTHY CREATIVE LTD, LEGO, NUMSKULL

3 MORE

Memories, Miyazaki and mid-century glamour...

STRONG FEMALE CHARACTER: WHAT MOVIES TEACH US

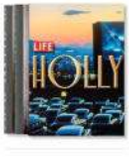
★★★★★

A new, bonus-chapter edition of critic Hanna Flint's 'movie-memoir-manifesto', exploring what it means to survive and thrive in the industry as a feminist of mixed-race heritage. Robustly written, it's both a colourful coming-of-age story and a solid rebuttal of persistent tropes. **JOEL HARLEY**

GHIBLIVERSE: STUDIO GHIBLI BEYOND THE FILMS

★★★★★

Michael Leader and Jake Cunningham follow up 2021's film-focused *Ghibliotheque* with a bright, breezy survey of other Studio Ghibli projects, from shorts and TV shows to museums, bakeries and one really big clock. Miyazaki and co's torch-bearing successors also receive a share of the spotlight. **JOEL HARLEY**

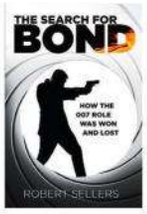


LIFE. HOLLYWOOD

★★★★★

Life magazine's access to vintage Hollywood's great and good is celebrated in Taschen's two-volume tome. The photo shoots of big names at work, home and play are meticulously composed but can look risible to modern eyes (eg Gary Cooper tending to his gun collection). **NEIL SMITH**

Five famous faces - but who missed out along the way?



BOOKS

THE SEARCH FOR BOND: HOW THE 007 ROLE WAS WON AND LOST

★★★★★ **ROBERT SELLERS** THE HISTORY PRESS

Marvel's TVA would have its work cut out tidying up the convoluted timelines of Bond hopefuls, victorious or not. But journalist Robert Sellers does a nifty job untangling the stories of who did/didn't get to wear the tux, mapping out a fascinating history of near-misses and unlikely wannabes alongside the casting misfires and stirring successes.

What emerges is a set of 'six degrees of Bond' scenarios, brimming with interconnections and branching alt-history potential. Almost every notable actor (even non-acting locksmiths, too) of their generation has seemingly entered consideration when recasting is due, so much so that most gatherings of Brit-film talent in a given era would surely include someone who'd been in serious contention.

More curious ideas start early, with *Blockbusters*' Bob 'B, please' Holness mentioned in relation to the role. Sillier pundits attached the role to singers like Tom Jones and Robbie Williams, while Michael Jackson allegedly put his hat in once (cue famous guacamole anecdote). Even *Bread* star/future Tory MP Giles Watling was contacted, pre-Pierce Brosnan.

More serious considerations ranged from Dirk Bogarde to Clive Owen to poor Michael Billington, repeatedly considered without success. With Bond casting, though, 'never say never' becomes a slogan. Actors mooted but unlucky at key points included Roger Moore (too busy), Timothy Dalton (too young) and Brosnan (damn that *Remington Steele*!), no less. Maybe Henry Cavill could bag his licence yet...

KEVIN HARLEY

THE SPAMALOT DIARIES

★★★★★

ERIC IDLE CROWN

There's rarely an idle moment in this chronicle of the Monty Python musical's 2004 creation, breathlessly related in bite-sized entries stuffed with their author's customary wit. Full of starry interactions and punning wordplay, it's an entertaining read that offers revealing insights into the agonies and ecstasies of putting a Broadway show together. Hirings, firings and a singing cow all figure, with director Mike Nichols emerging as its MVP.

NEIL SMITH

SPIELBERG: A RETROSPECTIVE

★★★★★

RICHARD SCHICKEL, **JOHN H. FOOTE** THAMES & HUDSON

This updated version of the late Schickel's 2012 tome covers every Spiel-movie from *Duel* to *The Fabelmans*. Some, like *The Lost World*, get short shrift, while others - notably *Kingdom of the Crystal Skull* - are (over)generously reappraised. But the biggies - *Jaws*, *E.T.* - receive rigorous analysis in a beautifully illustrated book stuffed with quotes from the author's close encounters with the director, who also provides a foreword. **JAMES MOTTRAM**

THE WORLDS OF WES ANDERSON

★★★★★

ADAM WOODWARD FRANCES LINCOLN

Distinct as they are, Wes' worlds brim with allusion and homage. Woodward unpicks these tendrils of influence, showing how Anderson embeds his forebears into his films' frames and feelings. Pausing to drop a needle on Anderson's Brit-rock fetishism, *Worlds* ranges from Truffaut to tatami shots, curios to classics, artists to auteurs. Between nods to Kazan and Cassavetes, Renoir and Ray, the result is a treasure trove of connoisseur-ish pleasures for ardent Wes-watchers.

KEVIN HARLEY

HISTORY PRESS, TASCHEN, FRANCES LINCOLN, THAMES & HUDSON, RANDOM HOUSE, WELBECK, FOUNTAIN PRESS, GETTY

BUFF

CIN[illegible]ELEBRATED AND DEBA[illegible]OSTING YOUR [illegible]VIE G[illegible]TO SUPERHERO LEVELS...

IS IT BOLLOCKS?

Buff investigates the facts behind outlandish movie plots.

THIS MONTH TWISTERS' TORNADO DISRUPTION

Q In disaster sequel *Twisters*, storm-chasers disrupt a tornado using moisture-absorbing particles. Fact, or pure spin?

A Paul Knightley, head of The Tornado and Storm Research Organisation (torro.org.uk), says...

The central premise of the film is the ability of the protagonists to launch an absorbent polymer material into a tornado, to disrupt it by altering the moisture content of the parent thunderstorm. After realising this is unrealistic, they switch to adding silver iodide to 'seed' clouds and make extra rainfall, in order to create colder downdraughts of air to 'choke' the tornado. Tornadoes do tend to weaken, and then die out when destructive interference from such downdraughts (powered by rain/hail) completely encircles the updraught (warm, moist air going up within a thunderstorm). However, the amounts of water involved can be vast – for example, 25mm (1 inch) of rainfall, falling over one square mile (2.6 sq km) of land, weighs around 65,000 tonnes. Thus, to create even a fairly modest amount of rain, one can speculate that you would need an awful lot of the material. Even if you had that, attempting to get it into a tornado would require a lot of vehicles, all coordinated from a control hub; a good road network; the tornado moving in a favourable direction in relation to the road network; and... Well, you get the idea. This isn't going to work.

Another scene shows a tornado passing over a large fire, with the fire moving up into the circulation. While the tornado is not 'catching fire' per se, it does appear to be lifting the flames into the circulation. There is some truth in this: some large grass and forest fires have been known to spawn circulations akin to tornadoes, which sometimes appear as menacing columns of smoke and flame.

The most important aspects in reducing the impacts of tornadoes on life and property are timely warnings and improving building codes.

VERDICT MOSTLY BOLLOCKS

ALTERNATIVE BOX OFFICE

The biggest movies... STARRING **DENZEL WASHINGTON**

01	**AMERICAN GANGSTER** 2007	$269.8M
02	**SAFE HOUSE** 2012	$208.1M
03	**PHILADELPHIA** 1993	$206.7M
04	**THE EQUALIZER** 2014	$192.3M
05	**THE EQUALIZER 3** 2023	$191.1M
06	**THE EQUALIZER 2** 2018	$190.4M
07	**THE PELICAN BRIEF** 1993	$195.3M
08	**INSIDE MAN** 2006	$186M
09	**DEJA VU** 2006	$180.6M
10	**UNSTOPPABLE** 2010	$167.8M

ON LOCATION REEL SPOTS BEHIND THE CAMERA

WHAT? The biggest (surviving) waterwheel in the world, the Laxey Wheel on the Isle of Man plays host to a shootout in faux-TV-detective comedy *Mindhorn*.

WHERE? The Great Laxey Wheel, Wheel Hill, Laxey, Isle of Man

GO? If you ever find yourself on Britain's biggest crown dependency, take the electric railway from Douglas to Laxey.

GETTY, MELINDA SUE GORDON, SONY, WARNER UNIVERSAL

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10 OF THE BEST

EYEBROWS IN MOVIES

You'll be surprised...

1

DUCK SOUP

Groucho Marx's verbal dexterity and funny walk were matched only by the gymnastics he could perform with his bushy brows. Painted on, in part, for maximum heft, they were waggled (usually in Margaret Dumont's direction) more than his signature cigar.

2

FRIDA

Salma Hayek went full monobrow to play artist and icon Frida Kahlo in Julie Taymor's handsomely mounted biopic. Hayek painted some of the pictures in the movie herself, but sported fake brows. 'For her, it represented freedom,' said Hayek of Kahlo's appearance.

3

ZOOLANDER 2

While *Buff* still wishes Eddie Murphy had appeared in *Zoo 2* (he once joked about a look that he'd named 'Black Iron'), we'll settle for Benedict Cumberbatch playing supermodel All with long black hair and bleached blond brows. Now, that's a look. 'All is all', indeed.

4

THE SHINING

Jack Nicholson's never been afraid of a bit of 'eyebrow acting', but he first went for broke playing Jack Torrance. They're practically on the ceiling when he tells Wendy he's gonna bash her brains in, and they rarely came down again in his subsequent career.

5

THE BLUE LAGOON

'You're always staring at my buppies,' says Emmeline (Brooke Shields) to fellow castaway Richard (Christopher Atkins). But most eye-catching of all are Shield's eyebrows. '[She's] always had the best brows in the business,' said *Vogue* when the actor turned 59.

6

AMERICAN PIE

Eugene Levy had been a screen actor for almost 30 years before he hit mainstream gold as the cringe-dad of Jason Biggs' pastry-porking Jim in this raunchy teen-com. Levy, who improvised much of his dialogue, ensured there was plenty of bush on show.

7

THE MUPPET CHRISTMAS CAROL

Winning the Best Eye-Fuzz on a Muppet award against stiff competition, Sam the Eagle is in every Muppet movie. *Buff*'s fave is *The Muppet Christmas Carol*, in which he plays a schoolmaster. Sam was performed by Frank Oz.

8

TAXI DRIVER

In 2020, Martin Scorsese's editor Thelma Schoonmaker shared that the great director 'does not allow eyebrow movement' from his actors by way of emphasis. But his own bushy brows are magnificent – check out his backseat cameo in *Taxi Driver*. Hairy stuff.

9

THE SCORPION KING

Wrestler Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson was renowned for The People's Eyebrow, in which he raised one brow and lowered the other to indicate threat to an opponent. He repeated it in his first lead film role, when his warrior, Mathayus, lands in a harem.

10

LIVE AND LET DIE

You might say that Roger Moore's entire portrayal of James Bond over seven films was done with a raised eyebrow, and right out of the gate, in *LALD*, it was clear this was a lighter, more tongue-in-cheek 007. Sheer magnetism, darling. **JAMIE GRAHAM**

ALAMY, GETTY, UNIVERSAL PICTURES, WALT DISNEY PICTURES

Did we miss something? Let us know on @totalfilm

REEL ESTATE

FOR SALE This chic modern home, located outside the bustle of Seoul, is perfect for a high-flying family looking to show off their status. The modernist architecture by Namgoong really wows: the open-plan ground floor is light and airy, all sharp lines and smart finishes. And the wall-sized window on the ground floor allows for full appreciation of the spacious garden, which is big enough to host an extremely memorable birthday gathering. This home's surprise wow factor can be found in the discreet but deceptively large basement, which is almost big enough to accommodate another family.

HINDSIGHT CORNER

MICHAEL KEATON

DUMBO (2019)

March 2019

'Soon as I showed up [on the first day], I thought, "So great I'm doing this again." I got ridiculously excited again once I was there… In a lot of ways it wasn't that different from [previous Tim Burton collaborations].'

August 2024

'I think I let [Burton] down on one movie, but that's just me, and it bugs me to this day. I was clueless on *Dumbo*. I sucked in *Dumbo*.'

FLOP CULTURE

Gen X nightmare-fuel

RETURN TO OZ

Walter Murch returned to L. Frank Baum's novels for his decades-on sequel to 1939's classic. Did he miss what made the original film so beloved?

Why it was a good idea (on paper)

After 46 years, a return to a place where troubles melt like lemon drops called. Honouring L. Frank Baum's source novels, New Hollywood sound man/editor Walter Murch's directorial debut promised nostalgia, voguish fantasy and star-to-be Fairuza Balk's cinema debut. All this and quippin' chickens, too.

What went wrong?

'I remember that some of it wasn't very nice,' says Dorothy about Oz in *Wizard*'s finale. Clearly, Murch recalled likewise. Asked by Disney what he wanted to make as his directing debut, he suggested Baum's books – luckily so, because with the material's copyright almost up, Disney needed to stamp its imprint on Oz's inhabitants. Thing is, Murch 'did a Newt/Hicks' and killed off the Tin Man and Lion. And he sent Dorothy – for her post-tornado obsession with Oz – to a sanatorium, where she narrowly escapes electrotherapy. *Return* is practically David Lynch for kids even before Dorothy visits a devastated Oz, where numerous nightmarish visions await. Substituting darkness for song and yearning, Murch drew on the book *Wisconsin Death Trip* and pioneered territory in murky reboots/requels – a brave move, perhaps, if not a successful one. The magic chicken's grating banter suggested lighter material was not his forte, either. Murch's on-set struggles meant he was briefly sacked, though George Lucas campaigned for his reinstatement. Completed by Murch but badly publicised after executive shifts at Disney, the resulting film met with mixed reviews and nonplussed cinemagoers: this was not an Oz they remembered.

Redeeming feature

While the shoddy Scarecrow betrayed budget issues, the Oscar-nominated effects hold up. David Shire's multi-faceted score also impresses.

What happened next?

Though proud of the film, Murch was to be a one-movie director. Balk became a star, however, and *Return To Oz* slowly gathered cult kudos.

Should it be remade?

No. The Yellow Brick Road is sacred ground for fans, best trodden lightly. Your shout, *Wicked*. **KEVIN HARLEY**

BUDGET	BOX OFFICE	AWARDS	TF STAR RATING	ROTTEN TOMATOES
$28m	$11.1m	0	★★★☆☆	58%

GETTY ALAMY GJ ENTERTAINMENT

IS IT JUST ME?

Just how much has the genre moved on since 1950's *The Asphalt Jungle*?

IS IT JUST ME OR ARE HEIST MOVIES ALL THE SAME?

JOEL HARLEY
@JOELHARLEY

In 1903, *The Great Train Robbery* set the stage for a subgenre of crime cinema that still abides today. Its story of steam-train-robbing outlaws was a precursor to John Huston's *The Asphalt Jungle* (1950) – widely regarded to be the first 'heist' movie as we know it. And you know what? Little has changed since.

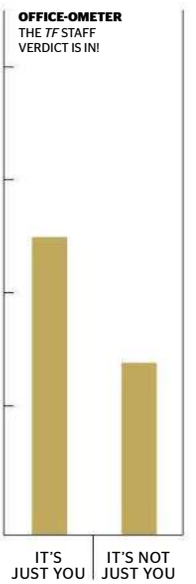
Following a fateful bank robbery from the POV of the criminals, *Asphalt* set in place a blueprint that Hollywood keeps coming back to, reaching undeniable heights with the likes of *Reservoir Dogs* (1992), *Heat* and *The Usual Suspects* (both 1995). The form peaked (with a wink) with the *Ocean's Eleven* remake (2001). But amid all the sequels, spin-offs and imitators, the heist film began to shed what grit previous examples possessed, replacing it with an air of inalienable smugness. Not only has the modern heist movie clung on to this sense of self-satisfaction, but it seems to have become an essential component.

Whether the crew walk away with the loot is immaterial – it's the tiresome ritual of the heist that matters, from the team's assembly to the bit where it looks as though everything is falling apart… only for it to be revealed that this was all part of the plan too.

Ironically, there is an adaptability to the formula that creatives have been able to exploit, and not just on the big screen – take the *Inside No.9* episode *Wuthering Heist*, for example, or *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*'s (played-out) annual staple, the Halloween Heist. The MCU played inside the toy box with two Ant-Man films and *Endgame*'s 'time heist'. Meanwhile, Zack Snyder added zombies in *Army of the Dead* and Kevin Hart took the action airborne in *Lift*.

But whether it's Earth's mightiest heroes or magicians (see *Now You See Me*) on the rob, much remains the same; and if you take the thrill of the unexpected out of the equation, what are you left with? Excessive reliance on genre conventions isn't unique to the heist film, of course (slasher movies, anyone?), but these ones wore thin at least 20 years ago… or is it just me?

Share your reaction at www.gamesradar.com/totalfilm or on Facebook and X.



ALAMY, MELINDA SUE GORDON/NETFLIX

LAST TIME
BELATED SEQUELS: WORTH THE WAIT?

THOMAS J. PARSONS
Sequels made 20-30 years later just feel 'off' to me.

EIDER DUTRA
They're rarely worth the wait. And worst-case scenario, they ruin the original forever.

MEXICAN_NEPHILIM
Does it matter when they come out? As a film fan, I want more content!

MATTHEW LAVAGNA
Often the team behind the original has either retired or moved on… consequently the sequel doesn't match its predecessor's look, tone or quality.

Graham Chapman in the title role

TOTAL FILM CLASSIC

MONTY PYTHON'S LIFE OF BRIAN

He's still a very naughty boy. Terry Gilliam on 45 years of Python's cinematic peak. WORDS **SIMON BLAND**

'To me, it's Python's finest moment,' grins Terry Gilliam, one-sixth of legendary British comedy troupe Monty Python. He's of course talking about the group's controversial second narrative feature *Monty Python's Life of Brian*, a movie that somehow feels more timely than ever despite 45 years having passed since its 1979 debut. 'We were very prescient,' he tells *Buff*. 'Everything the modern world is railing about and unable to deal with, we were talking about back then when we were all young and healthy. It's my favourite Python film.'

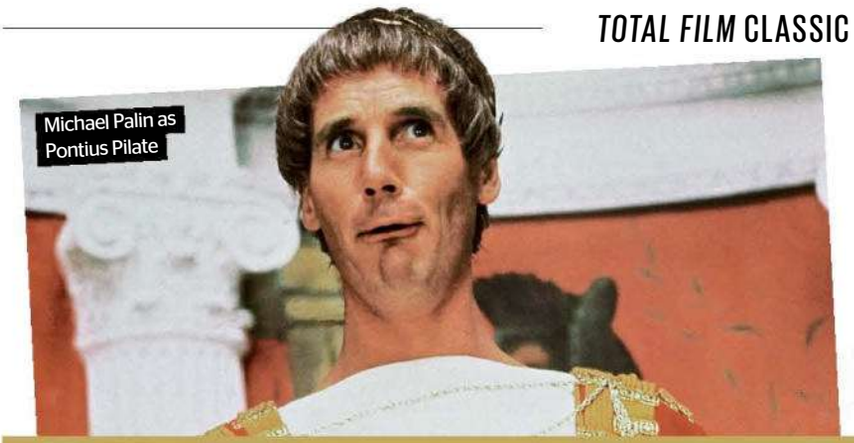
Perhaps Python's strongest big-screen outing, *Life of Brian* puts the story of Christ in its comedy crosshairs, taking aim at all of religion's wild miscommunications and contradictions without actually featuring the big guy upstairs – or their son – at all. Instead, it's poor Brian (Graham Chapman) who finds himself on the wrong side of Rome's wide-eyed believers when he's not actually the messiah at all – he's just a very naughty boy.

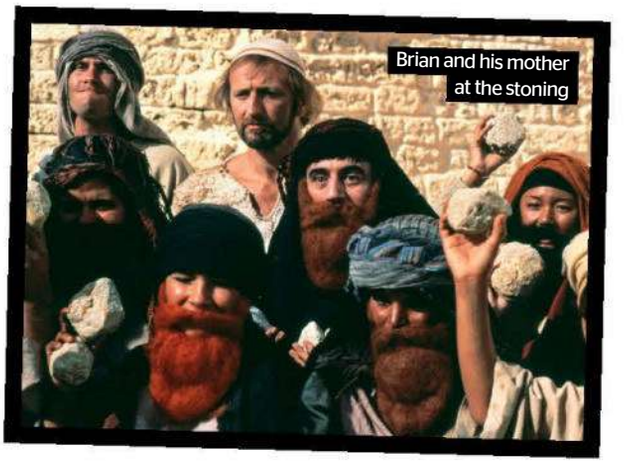
It was a piss-taking that caused more than a little outrage ('When you start dealing with people's belief systems, they often get angry,' chuckles Gilliam of its impact) but one that Gilliam and his fellow Pythons, John Cleese, Eric Idle, Michael Palin, Terry Jones and Graham Chapman, felt was long overdue. 'We decided we weren't going to attack Jesus,' says Gilliam, remembering the spark of the idea that piqued the Pythons' interest. 'He was a pretty good guy. We wanted to go after everybody else who created religions in his name – and those who didn't.'

After some years apart working on solo projects, the Pythons reconvened to write *Brian*'s script in a swanky Barbados beach house, where they were visited by a who's-who of late 70s British pop culture. 'We were at the heart of cool Britannia and it seemed to find us, even in Barbados,' says Gilliam, recalling visits from Mick Jagger and Jerry Hall. 'We were having an interesting time working together again, having been separated for quite a bit. Just being in one place together helped ideas flow much quicker.'

After successfully leading 1975's *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, it was decided that Chapman would take the lead as Brian.

ALAMY


Michael Palin as Pontius Pilate

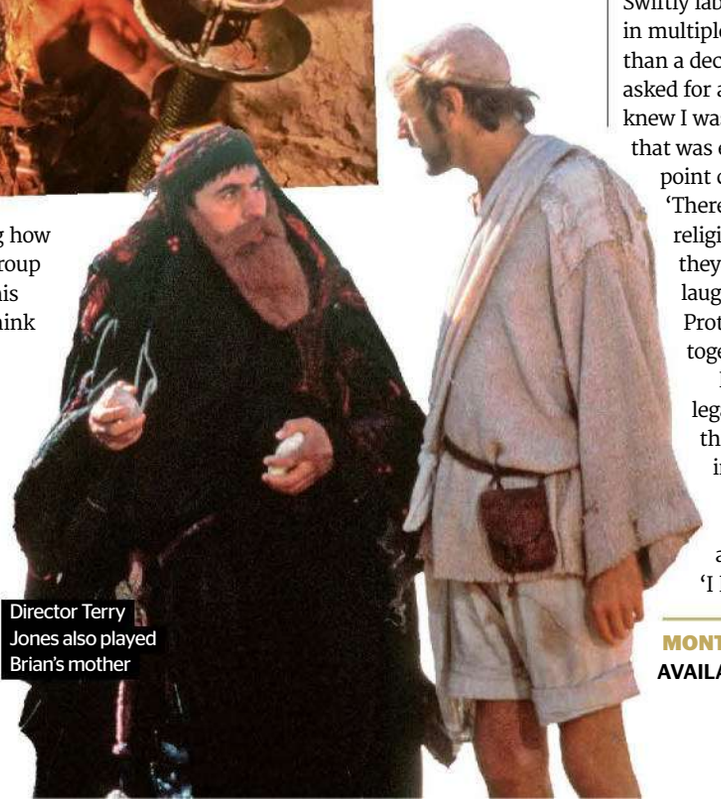

Brian and his mother at the stoning

Eric Idle leads the iconic sing-along at the film's climax

Terry Gilliam as the jailer

'Graham was great. It was interesting how he was the best leading man of the group and it was extraordinary to see how his presence held the thing together. I think he was happy to find a real sense of purpose [within Python].'

Meanwhile, Jones directed solo, with his *Holy Grail* co-helmer Gilliam focusing on production design. 'My joke was I was no longer a director – I was a rejecter,' laughs Gilliam, who released his first solo feature, *Jabberwocky*, just two years earlier. 'Once I got out on my own, I found I really enjoyed directing and didn't enjoy co-directing. The Pythons don't really take direction,' he adds. 'They don't like directors – they do what they do and that's the strength of the group.'


Director Terry Jones also played Brian's mother

For Gilliam, ensuring *Brian*'s world was as authentic as possible was the key to helping the Python 'nonsense play better'. This ethos brought the troupe to Monastir in Tunisia where they saved money by recycling sets from Franco Zeffirelli's *Jesus of Nazareth* TV series. 'They were supposed to have been torn down but they were still there so we reorganised and reused them,' recalls Gilliam. 'It saved us a whole lot of money.'

Speaking of dosh, it soon became a big point of contention. Despite bankrolling *Brian*, the big boss at film funder EMI hadn't actually read the script – and when he did, he was suitably outraged. Thankfully, the Pythons had a little help from their friends – specifically former Beatle George Harrison, who remortgaged his house, wrote a big fat cheque and allowed the film to keep going. 'He was such a big Python fan,' says Gilliam of Harrison's soft spot for silliness. 'Thank God for that because it led to the salvation of the film.'

Upon release, *Life of Brian* was treated almost as badly as its unfortunate hero. Swiftly labelled blasphemous, it was banned in multiple countries – in some cases for more than a decade. The Pythons couldn't have asked for a better marketing boost. 'I always knew I was going to be in for it and I thought that was exciting,' smiles Gilliam, who at one point considered a career as a missionary. 'There's nothing more exciting than religions fighting against religions, but they all teamed up [in protest],' he laughs. 'We brought the Christians, Protestants, Jews and Catholics all together in a united front.'

Forty-five years later, *Life of Brian*'s legacy remains a point of pride for this former Python: 'We were saying important things and making people laugh. Some of the best Python scenes are in that film – and it's about something,' suggests Gilliam. 'I love that people still quote it.'

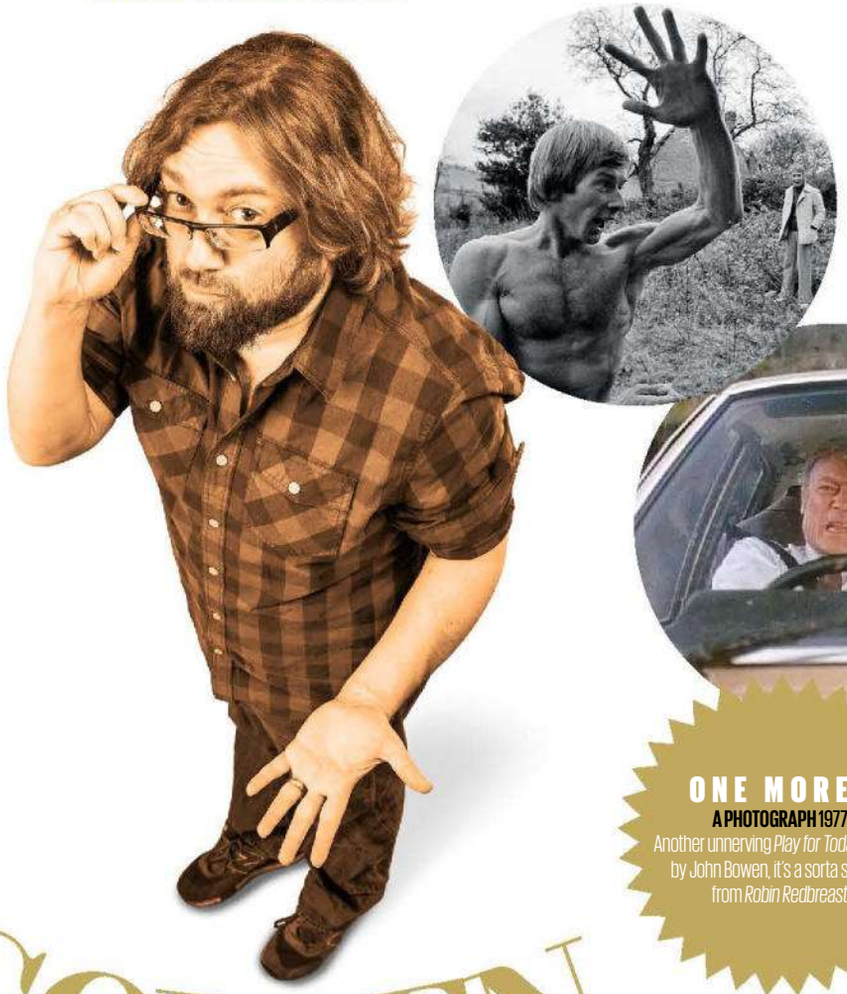
MONTY PYTHON'S LIFE OF BRIAN IS AVAILABLE ON DVD, BLU-RAY AND DIGITAL.

GOLDEN GRAHAMS

Editor-at-Large Jamie Graham unearths underrated classics...

THIS MONTH

Robin Redbreast and *The Appointment*



For this month's double bill I find myself revisiting two British TV horror movies that were both lost to obscurity for many years before being rediscovered and released by the BFI.

Directed by James MacTaggart and written by John Bowen, *Robin Redbreast* aired in December 1970 as part of the BBC's *Play for Today* series. Note the date – that's four months before *Blood on Satan's Claw* was released, and three years before *The Wicker Man*. Those two movies, along with *Witchfinder General* (1968), are considered the Unholy Trinity of folk-horror cinema, and yet *Robin Redbreast* shares many of their tropes. It is, in fact, loosely based on the same real-life 1945 murder in the English village of Lower Quinton that influenced David Pinner's 1967 novel *Ritual*, which was the (uncredited) source of *The Wicker Man*.

But enough history. What of the events in the film? It centres on Norah Palmer (Anna Cropper), a BBC script editor who exits a long relationship and chooses to decompress at an isolated house in a small village in the south of England. The locals seem – to her – eccentric, but their cleaving to ancient customs takes on a more sinister air when she sleeps with gamekeeper Rob (Andy Bradford) during the harvest festival and falls pregnant. The birth of the child looks set to align with the villagers' Easter rituals…

The Appointment, meanwhile, was shot in 1980, intended as the first entry of a 12-part supernatural anthology series entitled *A Step in the Wrong Direction*. The deal collapsed, so production house First Principle Films instead sought a theatrical release before settling for a home-video premiere in 1982. The only feature directed by Lindsey C. Vickers, assistant director on several Hammer titles in the early 70s, its narrative is slim yet oblique and will frustrate many with its lack of answers, while its slow pacing and extracted sequences suggest it was padded out to attain feature length.

And yet it oozes dread, opening with an all-timer of a scare – a young girl walking home through the woods is taunted by voices and then dragged into the trees with freakish force – and closing on an expertly staged car crash. The bulk of the action is set three years after the young girl's disappearance, as another schoolgirl, Joanne (Samantha Weysom), becomes upset that her father (*The Wicker Man*'s Edward Woodward) is unable to attend her music recital.

That night, the girl, her dad and her mum (Jane Merrow) all share premonitory nightmares involving a car wreck and large Rottweilers. How everything actually ties together is anyone's guess (perhaps the girl's anger has summoned the supernatural force lurking in the woods?), but the menace is palpable as the camera prowls the house, moving through a nauseating atmosphere of guilt and implied incest.

The BFI released *Robin Redbreast* on DVD as part of its Gothic season in 2013 (the original colour videotape was wiped, but this telerecording only feels all the more desolate in black-and-white), and then issued *The Appointment* in 2022. Both are still available, with *The Appointment* also on BFI Player. Do yourself a favour and taste their terrors.

FOR MORE RECOMMENDATIONS, FOLLOW @JAMIE_GRAHAM9 ON X/TWITTER

See these if you liked...

THE WICKER MAN 1973
'Have these children never heard of Jesus?' This has source-material ties with *Robin Redbreast*.

MULHOLLAND DRIVE 2001
Like *The Appointment*, Lynch's masterpiece is a pilot twisted into an enigmatic feature.

KILL LIST 2011
Ben Wheatley was at the cutting edge of the new wave of folk horror.

MIDSOMMAR 2019
Ari Aster later partook in the folk-horror festivities. Worth sacrificing three hours to the Director's Cut.

ONE MORE...

A PHOTOGRAPH 1977
Another unnerving *Play for Today* written by John Bowen, it's a sorta spin-off from *Robin Redbreast*.

BFI

INSTANT EXPERT

FOUND FOOTAGE

Keeping it reel...

NASTY VIDEOS

In using the killer's camera to put viewers in a monster's shoes, *Peeping Tom* (1960) teased the voyeurism that would come to define a subgenre. Before becoming a horror staple, the technique – presenting fabricated footage as if it were docu-real – was employed in arthouse films *The Connection* (1961) and *Coming Apart* (1969). Later, *Cannibal Holocaust* (1980) utilised found footage to bear witness to atrocities in the Amazon rainforest.

STRANGER THAN FICTION

Found footage has always blurred the lines between illusion and reality. As Deodato was forced to prove that no humans had been killed in making *Cannibal Holocaust*, so Japanese filmmaker Hideshi Hino was the subject of an FBI investigation after Charlie Sheen (!) mistook *Guinea Pig 2* (1985) for real-life snuff. Years later, *The Blair Witch Project* (1999) revolutionised viral marketing by suggesting its cast had genuinely disappeared while making the film.

HERE TO SLAY

While the form has been harnessed in sci-fi (*District 9*, 2009), superhero (*Chronicle*, 2012) and comedy (*Project X*, 2012) movies, found footage remains synonymous with horror. After *The Blair Witch Project*'s success, *Paranormal Activity* (2007) brought supernatural torment closer to home. *Cloverfield* (2008) delivered an intimate-epic version of the monster movie, and *Creep* (2014) gave us weirdo killer 'Peachfuzz'. Anthology franchise *V/H/S*, meanwhile, remains a flag-bearer.

GRAVE ENCOUNTERS

From that infamous cottage corner in *Blair Witch* to terrified journalist Angela being dragged screaming into the darkness at the end of 2007's *[REC]*, the camera operator's fate in a found-footage film is not a happy one. But none have suffered more than 14-year-old Amy in *Megan Is Missing* (2011), a controversial drama that experienced renewed exposure after being shared by traumatised TikTok viewers.

BLACK MIRRORS

A latter-day version of epistolary novels like *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*, the subgenre has itself evolved in line with changing technology, developing from handheld camcorder footage to the latest in CCTV equipment, drone footage and live streaming. In the latest update, cinema has exploited screen-sharing tech to bring us *Unfriended* (2014), *Missing* (2023) and Rob Savage's *Host* (2020) and *Dashcam* (2021). Clearly, found footage is here faux the long term... **JOEL HARLEY**

KEY MOVIES

CANNIBAL HOLOCAUST 1980

★★★★☆

Problematic but brutally effective, Ruggero Deodato's stomach-churner remains the quintessential video nasty.

THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT 1999

★★★★★

Three documentary-makers find themselves lost in the woods. Horror would never be the same.

PARANORMAL ACTIVITY 2007

★★★★☆

Seven in-canon films may have stretched patience, but Oren Peli's door-slamming original turned found footage on its head.

CLOVERFIELD 2008

★★★★☆

Matt Reeves takes the technique to epic heights in this account of a devastating kaiju attack on New York. Heads will roll...

ALAMY, STUDIOCANAL, 8383 PRODUCTIONS LLC / KOCH MEDIA, E1, VERTIGO, LIONSGATE, PARAMOUNT, 88 FILMS, ARROW

MAGNOLIA'S RAIN OF FROGS

Two hours and 45 minutes into Paul Thomas Anderson's *Magnolia*, a frog somersaults from the sky to splat on the windshield of police officer Jim Kurring (John C. Reilly). Seconds later, the heavens open and thousands of amphibians drench the San Fernando Valley.

'What the actual…?' was many viewers' initial response, but the downpour makes perfect sense as a means to close out an epic drama about myriad lost souls searching for forgiveness, catharsis and connection. 'If you refuse to let [my people] go, behold, I will smite all your territory with frogs,' the Lord tells Moses in Exodus 8:2 of the Old Testament. 'The river shall bring forth frogs abundantly, which shall go up and come into your house, into your bedroom, on your bed, into the houses of your servants, on your people, into your ovens, and into your kneading bowls.'

In PTA's mood-mosaic, this moment of divine intervention coincides with the characters each having a moment of self-discovery, reflection and/or reconciliation. For alpha-male sex guru Frank T.J. Mackey (Tom Cruise), he's able to absolve his dying father Earl (Jason Robards) and to begin to recognise his own vulnerability, and let go of the anger that began with his father walking out on him as a child. Quiz kid Stanley (Jeremy Blackman), meanwhile, confronts his exploitative father in a scene of heart-rending self-empowerment. And the aforementioned cop, Jim, realises that the world is too chaotic to align with his own neat, optimistic code of right and wrong and his innate belief that everything can be understood and is as it should be. It's the same for all of the characters: if they can walk through this cleansing deluge then they might just find redemption shining brightly on the other side.

Anderson later claimed, 'I didn't realise that the rain of frogs was in the Bible until I'd finished writing the script…' If true, he wasted no time in amplifying the theme, slyly introducing the numbers eight, two and 82 throughout the movie to allude to the passage in Exodus. As for viewers, we were left to ponder not just the meaning but how the production pulled it off: 8,000 prop frogs is the answer, made of soft, sticky rubber to look biological as they fell, and to hit with a squishy plop. **JAMIE GRAHAM**

ALAMY

GIVING CREDIT

Saluting the behind-the-scenes talent making movie magic.

AMY THOMAS CG CREATURE SUPERVISOR

Amy Thomas is a London-based character FX (CFX) supervisor who has worked at some of the biggest VFX houses in the world, including Weta FX, ILM, Framestore, DNEG and Scanline VFX. She is on the board of the Visual Effects Society, a member of BAFTA Connect, and lectures in visual effects at the National Film and Television School. She has helped bring some of the biggest blockbusters of the last decade to the screen, and is an advocate for better working practices within the industry.

Describe your job in simple terms.
My role is to bring digital creatures to life by simulating muscles, skin and other elements, ensuring their movements are natural and realistic. Recently, I've been training in virtual production, as I'm excited about the opportunity to combine my experience in CG creature work with real-time technologies.

How did you get into VFX?
I started in stop-motion animation in Australia, but it was a tough industry to break into. That led me to study game development, where I learned more about 3D tools and digital workflows. I landed a job at an indie studio, which gave me the experience I needed to join Weta – my dream job at the time.

What have you worked on?
At Weta I worked on the Hobbit trilogy (to my nerdy delight, the first asset I created was a simple prop rig of the One Ring), *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* and *Valerian and the City of a Thousand Planets*. Since coming to the UK I've worked on *Avengers: Endgame*, *Venom*, *The Terror* S1, *Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom*, *Meg 2: The Trench*, *Jurassic World: Dominion* and live show ABBA Voyage.

What's the biggest misconception about your job?
That it's a 'plug-and-play' process. Artists must build custom rigs and carefully fine-tune simulations, and CFX extends beyond creatures to include elements like cloth and destruction effects. It's an incredibly technical field, requiring deep knowledge of anatomy, physics and software, all while meeting harsh production deadlines. Far from automated work, CFX artists write custom scripts and problem-solve under intense time pressure to bring creatures to life with realism.

What's been the proudest moment of your career so far?
The Lord of the Rings was the reason I wanted to work in VFX, so getting the opportunity to create a small part of Middle-earth in The Hobbit will always be a dream come true. Recently, I earned my Virtual Production Certificate from the National Film and Television School, and stepping into a virtual-production-supervisor role is a new chapter that has me excited about where the industry is heading.

What's the best thing about your job?
That will always be seeing something I've worked on come to life on screen. Whether it's a creature that looks and moves as if it's real or a world that feels immersive, knowing that I had a hand in making that happen is incredibly rewarding. Another fulfilling aspect is the strong bonds I've built with my VFX colleagues. The shared passion and dedication have led to some of my closest friendships.

What's the worst thing about your job?
The strikes have been a challenge, leaving many talented people out of work. Another issue is when spokespeople for films downplay or even deny the use of CGI. This dismisses the enormous effort that VFX artists put into their craft, often under immense pressure. Now, with AI creeping into the creative process, the irony is even sharper: while there's worry about AI replacing artists, many in the industry still pretend they don't rely on the incredible work of human VFX artists in the first place.

Working on the Hobbit trilogy was a highlight

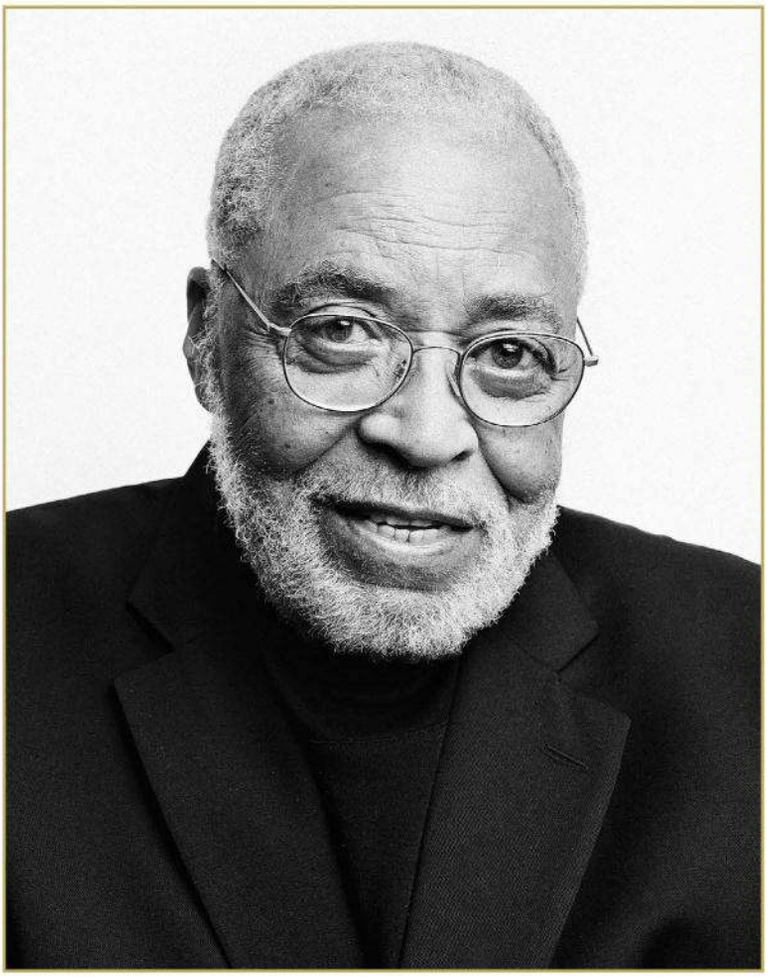
'To my nerdy delight, the first asset I created was a simple prop rig of the One Ring'

Is there a particular director or genre you like working with/in?
I love working in sci-fi and fantasy because they offer so much creative freedom, especially with creatures and world-building. I'm a huge fan of Neill Blomkamp – *District 9* is one of my favourite films, and I'd be thrilled if a sequel ever came to life. With his background in VFX, Blomkamp truly understands how to use it as a tool to enhance storytelling, and he integrates it into the narrative in a way that feels natural and essential.

If someone wants to get into VFX, what should they do?
Start by learning the essential software, like Maya, Houdini or Unreal Engine, and build a strong portfolio. Don't shy away from learning programming languages like Python – it's incredibly useful for automating workflows and saving time. Seek out internships or junior roles, even at indie studios, to gain hands-on experience. Stay curious and adaptable; VFX is an ever-evolving field, and embracing continuous learning will set you up for long-term success. **JORDAN FARLEY**

Thomas is an advocate for VFX artists

1931-2024



JAMES EARL JONES

The Force is strong with this one,' said Darth Vader as he targeted Luke's X-Wing during the thrilling climax of *Star Wars*. The owner of the Dark Lord's baritone voice, James Earl Jones, might have been talking about himself.

Born in Arkabutla, Mississippi, in 1931, Jones moved to the Michigan farm of his maternal grandparents when he was five, after his father had left home to pursue acting. The upheaval induced a stutter that lasted into Jones' teens. Acting helped – he was drawn to theatre while studying at the University of Michigan.

Jones moved to New York City after completing military service during the Korean War, and made his Broadway debut in *Sunrise at Campobello* in 1958. He excelled in numerous Shakespeare productions, playing Oberon, Caliban, Othello, Claudius and King Lear, and won a Tony Award for portraying the first Black heavyweight boxing champion in *The Great White Hope*, in 1969. Reprising the role in Martin Ritt's 1970 film, he became only the second Black actor to be Oscar-nominated, following Sidney Poitier. By the time Jones received an Honorary Oscar in 2011, he had already won two Tony Awards (from four nominations), two Primetime Emmys (from eight nominations) and a Grammy, in 1977, for spoken-word album *Great American Documents*, meaning that he belonged in the high-altitude EGOT club.

On screen, Jones racked up 70-plus TV credits (*Roots*, *L.A. Law*, *The Simpsons*, *Law & Order*, *Frasier*, *House*…) and more than 80 film roles. He began his cinema career with a bang, playing a B-52 bombardier in Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove* (1964), and portrayed the first Black president in *The Man* (1972). Though he humbly classed himself as a jobbing actor ('I can't put down any jobs that help me pay my bills'), he several times made deep impressions in the public consciousness. Key roles include playing the villain in *Conan the Barbarian* (1982), King Jaffe Joffer in *Coming to America* (and its 2021 sequel), a reclusive author, based broadly on J.D. Salinger, in *Field of Dreams* (1989), and CIA deputy director Admiral James Greer in Jack Ryan movies *The Hunt for Red October* (1990), *Patriot Games* (1992) and *Clear and Present Danger* (1994). 'To the best of my abilities, I give them Academy Award-calibre performances,' he said of his many roles.

An actor of grace and gravitas, Jones lent his magnificent voice to documentaries, the US news ('This is CNN') and noble Mufasa in both the animated and live-action versions of *The Lion King* (1994, 2019). But it is Darth Vader who reigns supreme. Jones was paid just $7,000 to voice the villain in the 1977 original, and refused credit in order to preserve David Prowse's physical performance. Jones returned for *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980), *Return of the Jedi* (1983), *Star Wars: Episode III – Revenge of the Sith* (2005), and *Rogue One* (2016).

He is survived by his son, Flynn Earl Jones, and brother Matthew. **JAMIE GRAHAM**

GETTY

THE *TF* BRAIN

WHICH PRESIDENT ARE YOU?

Are you saving the planet or your own skin? At odds with comets, E.T.s or other films with the same plot?

START

ARE YOU A PISSED-OFF HARRISON FORD?

YES

OOZING RIGHTEOUS RAGE, OR LITERALLY TURNING RED?

FORD SMASH!!!

YOU ARE PRESIDENT THADDEUS ROSS/RED HULK

CAPTAIN AMERICA: BRAVE NEW WORLD

GET OFF MY PLANE!!!

YOU ARE PRESIDENT JAMES MARSHALL

AIR FORCE ONE

NO

ARE YOU A VETERAN OF THE GREAT WHITE HOUSE ACTION-MOVIE WAR OF 2013?

YES

YOUR KEY ALLY: FILTHY-MOUTHED GERARD BUTLER OR FILTHY-VESTED CHANNING TATUM?

B@!*!R

YOU ARE PRESIDENT BENJAMIN ASHER

OLYMPUS HAS FALLEN

STAINED-TUM

YOU ARE PRESIDENT JAMES SAWYER

WHITE HOUSE DOWN

NO

IS THE BIGGEST TEST OF YOUR TENURE ROLAND EMMERICH IN DISASTER-MOVIE MODE?

YES

DOES HE DROP ALIENS ON YOU, OR AN ENTIRE AIRCRAFT CARRIER?

ALIENS

YOU ARE PRESIDENT CHARLOTTE FIELD

LONG SHOT

AIRCRAFT CARRIER

YOU ARE PRESIDENT THOMAS WILSON

2012

NO

YOU ARE PRESIDENT ELIZABETH LANFORD

INDEPENDENCE DAY: RESURGENCE

YOU ARE PRESIDENT THOMAS WHITMORE

INDEPENDENCE DAY

FIRST

SECOND

ARE YOU PRES FOR THE FIRST INVASION, OR THE DEADLIER, DULLER ONE?

YOU ARE PRESIDENT JANIE ORLEAN

DON'T LOOK UP

YOU ARE PRESIDENT TOM BECK

DEEP IMPACT

THREAT

OPPORTUNITY

FALLING COMETS: EXISTENTIAL THREAT OR PR OPPORTUNITY?

YES

NO

DOES YOUR CV RUN FROM POTUS TO 'BABYSITTER FOR SETH ROGEN'?

DISNEY, LIONSGATE, SONY, 20TH CENTURY STUDIOS, PARAMOUNT, NETFLIX

NAME THE FRAME

Can you guess which films these sword-based scenes are from?

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

ALAMY

ANSWERS: 1. KILL BILL: VOL. 1. 2. CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON. 3. THE DUELLISTS. 4. JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS. 5. ROBIN HOOD: MEN IN TIGHTS. 6. ZATOICHI: THE BLIND SWORDSMAN. 7. CONAN THE BARBARIAN. 8. HERO

Dialogue

Mail, rants, theories etc.

HAVE YOUR SAY
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★ STAR LETTER

Is 2024 the ultimate year for bad movies? *Madame Web*, *The Crow*, *Unfrosted* and *Argylle* are just some of the ones that have been panned over the past nine months. It pains me to say it, but even if films get scathing reviews, I still want to see some of them. I thought *I Saw the TV Glow* was rubbish, though most people seemed to love it. I bet there are loads of films out there that were panned in the past but which are now seen as successful.

STEPHEN MCCARTHY, GLASGOW

Indeed – the most iconic example perhaps being Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*, a film ahead of its time in so many ways (well, aside from no one having a smartphone or flat-screen telly, but light-up brollies being a 'thing'). But yes, we're the same when it comes to fancying a slice of turkey (or overcooked *Crow*, if you will). Stephen and everyone with a letter printed here will receive a copy of Yorgos Lanthimos and Emma Stone's trippy triptych *Kinds of Kindness*, available on 21 October on DVD and Blu-ray via Searchlight. Didn't send an address? Email it! Don't make us ask thrice!

DIAL M FOR MISTAKE

May I please point out that *The Passion of the Christ* was a huge box-office success [$612,060,372 to be exact], and not the $612 worldwide flop you accidentally implied in *TF*354 [p54]? The 'm' makes all the difference!

GIBSY, HAMPSHIRE

C'mon, we were only $612,059,760 out, what's the problem? Not sure where the 'm' went, to be honest – maybe we'd run out of that issue's quota and needed one for the cover, lest we ended up with TOTAL FIL (your monthly guide to what's new in the world of father-in-law-ing).

Nothing to crow about? Bill Skarsgård and FKA twigs

𝕏

@paulkleinyoo
[ON *INTERSTELLAR* TURNING 10]
'The "I love you forever" scene is honestly one of Nolan's best'

SHAPE OF SLAUGHTER

Just following up my letter from *TF*354 about my wife's whole confusion over *Sting* and *Longlegs* (or, as I now call it, *Stonglegs*). We finally watched *Sting*, and though my missus did enjoy it, she kept expecting Mr Redford and Mr Newman to turn up! In other crazy film news, my son told me he was going to see *Alien: Rhombus* at the cinema this week. It certainly is hip to be (almost) square in my household!

PHIL SLOAN, BEXLEY

Thanks for the update, Phil – and we hope your son is looking forward to the sequel *Alien: Rebus*, in which a bloodthirsty monster subjects a group of intergalactic travellers to some fiendish picture puzzles. ('"In space, no one can hear you…" Superman "S" + a tub of Tesco double cream, what could it possibly be??')

CLAP HAPPY

At the recent Venice Film Festival, several movies with prominent actors in the casts received lengthy standing ovations. *The Room Next Door*: 17 minutes. *Joker: Folie à Deux*: 11 minutes. *Maria*: eight minutes. The list goes on… What's the deal? Who can clap that long? Why is it happening? Does it happen at Cannes and other festivals? And, most importantly, have any *TF* reviewers seen this in action and taken part?

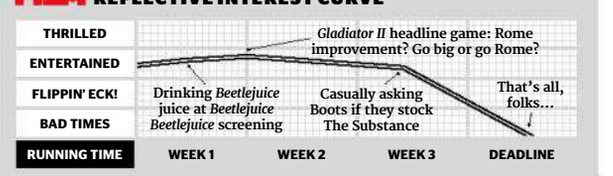
KEVIN STANLEY, RUSKINGTON

WHAT YOU MISSED ON THE POD LAST MONTH

Exclusive big-name chats galore: Kathryn Hahn, Jenna Ortega, James McAvoy, Kate Winslet, Andy Samberg… Plus our favourite movie witches and foreign-language remakes, spoiler-free reviews and more.

INSIDE TOTAL FILM

FILM REFLECTIVE INTEREST CURVE™



KIMBERLEY FRENCH/SKY, YELLOW FLOWER

OFFICE SPACED

CHATTER 'GEMS' OVERHEARD IN THE *TOTAL FILM* OFFICE THIS MONTH...

* 'After *Lethal Weapon 2*'s "The magic is back", we got my favourite half-arsed tagline: *LW3*'s "The magic is back again".'

* **'Thinking of doing a fantasy novel about window cleaning: *The Rungs of Power*.'**

JAMES KINSLEY
[ON THE *MICKEY 17* TRAILER] 'Bong Joon-ho and R-Patz? Take my money!'

A smokin' performance: Kate Winslet in *Lee*

Sorry, we can't address your questions in full right now – we're currently at a major festival where the ovation for a leading auteur's latest opus has entered its third day. We've forgotten what sitting down feels like. If you wouldn't mind contacting one of the emergency services, or Domino's Pizza, that'd be ace, thanks.

PUFF PIECE

Kate Winslet was very good in *Lee* and I'm sure it was all part of the character, but I came away wondering if I was feeling the effects of all that smoking on screen! Does not lighting up on screen really do a character a disservice if they were a heavy smoker in real life? What do people think?

PAIGE TURNER, SOUTHAMPTON

Well, let's just be thankful the film wasn't in 4DX, allowing viewers the full odoriferous experience – not least because, as Winslet revealed in an interview with Virgin Radio UK, the production used herbal cigarettes, 'which sort of smell a little bit like burning poo, to be honest'.

'BORNE SUPREMACY

Loved your list of the best Stephen King adaptations in issue 355. However, I think you missed out on *Dolores Claiborne*. The 1995 drama has a career-best Kathy Bates in the title role, a supporting cast including Christopher Plummer, Jennifer Jason Leigh, David Strathairn, Judy Parfitt and John C. Reilly, terrific direction from Taylor Hackford and a compelling storyline that bounces between eras (the eclipse scene is a marvel). Bates herself has called it her favourite film experience, and that alone makes it deserving of more attention as a brilliant King work.

MICHAEL WEYER, ILLINOIS

Just goes to show how many great choices we had to select from. *Dolores Claiborne* is certainly our second-favourite Bates-starring King adap, but we did feel priority had to go to *Misery*, for a number of reasons (one big one being that we're rather fond of keeping our ankles intact).

ALL OF A ZITHER

Re: *The Third Man* [*Classic Soundtrack*, issue 355]. I recall a showing of the film at the NFT in the early 80s, which was introduced by an incoherent Oliver Reed. He kept trying to tell us the zither player was present, but couldn't remember his name. He was eventually dragged off stage and the opening credits rolled. From his seat, Reed shouted, 'That's it, Anton Karas!' The great man was not only present but had brought his zither, which he played in the bar for about 40 mins, at the end of which he simply packed up his instrument and slipped away. One of the most memorable evenings I've ever spent at the cinema.

BERNARD O'SULLIVAN, VIA EMAIL

Thanks for sharing such a great story, Bernard – and what a treat to be there. Although it sounds like Mr Oli may not have been able to recall the evening as well as you...

TOTAL FILM

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TOTAL FILM

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60 SECOND SCREENPLAY

TF SAVES YOU THE COST OF A MOVIE EVERY MONTH. THIS ISSUE: **BORDERLANDS**...

WORDS MATT LOOKER

FADE IN:

INT: SPACE PRISON, PANDORA
A voiceover by CATE BLANCHETT explains that an ancient alien race called the Eridians are responsible for everything in the movie. It is doubtful they would want any credit.

KEVIN HART
Ariana? I'm Kevin. I'm here to rescue you!

ARIANA GREENBLATT
Aren't you a little short for this video-game character?! OK, let's bring my psycho friend Florian Munteanu, too; that takes care of our gang's origin story.

EXT: WASTELAND
CATE BLANCHETT is a bounty hunter. She brings prisoners to a bar, and then kills them and everyone else in sight. EDGAR RAMÍREZ hires her to track down his daughter on Pandora.

CATE BLANCHETT
I hate this planet. Mostly because it's where I grew up as part of my mysterious backstory, which I won't reveal yet.

JACK BLACK
Hello! I am an irritating robot. I was programmed to wait for you, but I don't know by whom, which is also mysterious.

CATE BLANCHETT and JACK BLACK find ARIANA GREENBLATT, who throws explosive bunnies at them. CATE BLANCHETT fights her and KEVIN HART and FLORIAN MUNTEANU, but then an army attacks, so they team up and run away.

CATE BLANCHETT
Thank God we escaped the space soldiers and managed to kill a piss monster! Anyway, so Ariana is the Daughter of Eridia, destined to open a vault containing ancient secrets?

KEVIN HART
C'mon. You have two Oscars.

INT: CLUB
The gang visits a contact that has information about the vault. It turns out to be JAMIE LEE CURTIS, CATE BLANCHETT's old guardian who abandoned her as a child. Also mysteriously.

ARIANA GREENBLATT
By the way, I'm not technically Edgar's daughter. He cloned me from Eridian blood so that I can fulfil the prophecy to open the vault. It's a sound plan.

They search for a vault key, leading to quirky fun and soundtracked fights that in no way could be accused of imitating *Guardians of the Galaxy*, uh-uh. KEVIN HART sacrifices himself and CATE BLANCHETT teleports away.

CATE BLANCHETT
I've never had the ability to teleport before. Oh well, it's probably not important.

EDGAR RAMÍREZ appears via hologram and tells CATE BLANCHETT to bring him ARIANA GREENBLATT, who sees this and knocks CATE BLANCHETT unconscious.

JACK BLACK
Oh! I should probably show you an old message from your mother. It says that once she found out who you are she had to keep you safe.

CATE BLANCHETT
That's weird. Anyway, let's find Ariana, the fake Daughter of Eridia. I wonder if the real one exists?

EXT: VAULT
The remaining gang try to open the vault. Nothing happens. EDGAR RAMÍREZ arrives and KEVIN HART miraculously reappears and tries to kill him. Nothing happens.

CATE BLANCHETT
Hey, look! I've just teleported here. It turns out, I'm the REAL Daughter of Eridia and I somehow have absolute control of my powers already!

EDGAR RAMÍREZ
Great. Now open the vault for me or I'll kill your friends, even though it seems like none of you like each other.

CATE BLANCHETT gains fire powers, destroys a spaceship and grows wings. Then she takes EDGAR RAMÍREZ inside the vault and leaves him there to be eaten by a monster.

CATE BLANCHETT
Hmm, that vault contained all the ancient secrets of Eridia that we've been looking for this whole time. Oh well, it's probably not important.

EXT: FIREWORKS SHOW
With EDGAR RAMÍREZ gone, the inhabitants of Pandora celebrate, but it's not really clear why.

CATE BLANCHETT
So my mother knew I was the Daughter of Eridia and kept me away from the vault to keep me safe, but being near it awoke my powers. Shall we fly somewhere?

ARIANA GREENBLATT
C'mon. You have two Oscars.

FIN

'All we are is dust in the wind, dude'

ALAMY LIONSGATE

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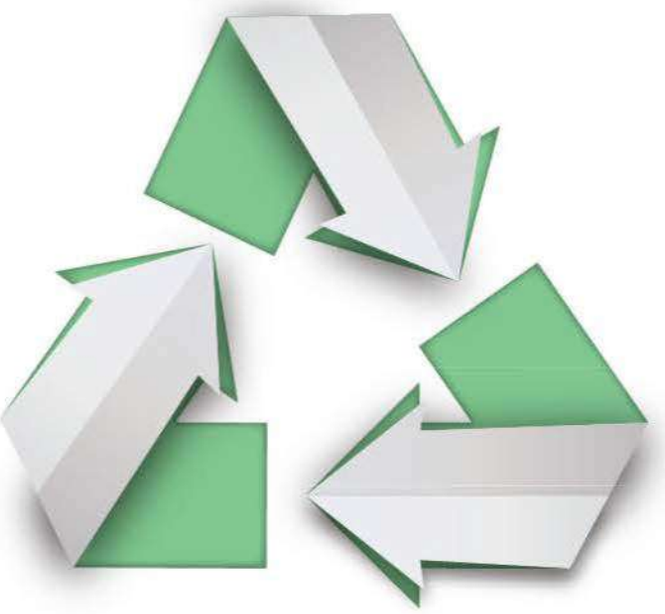

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